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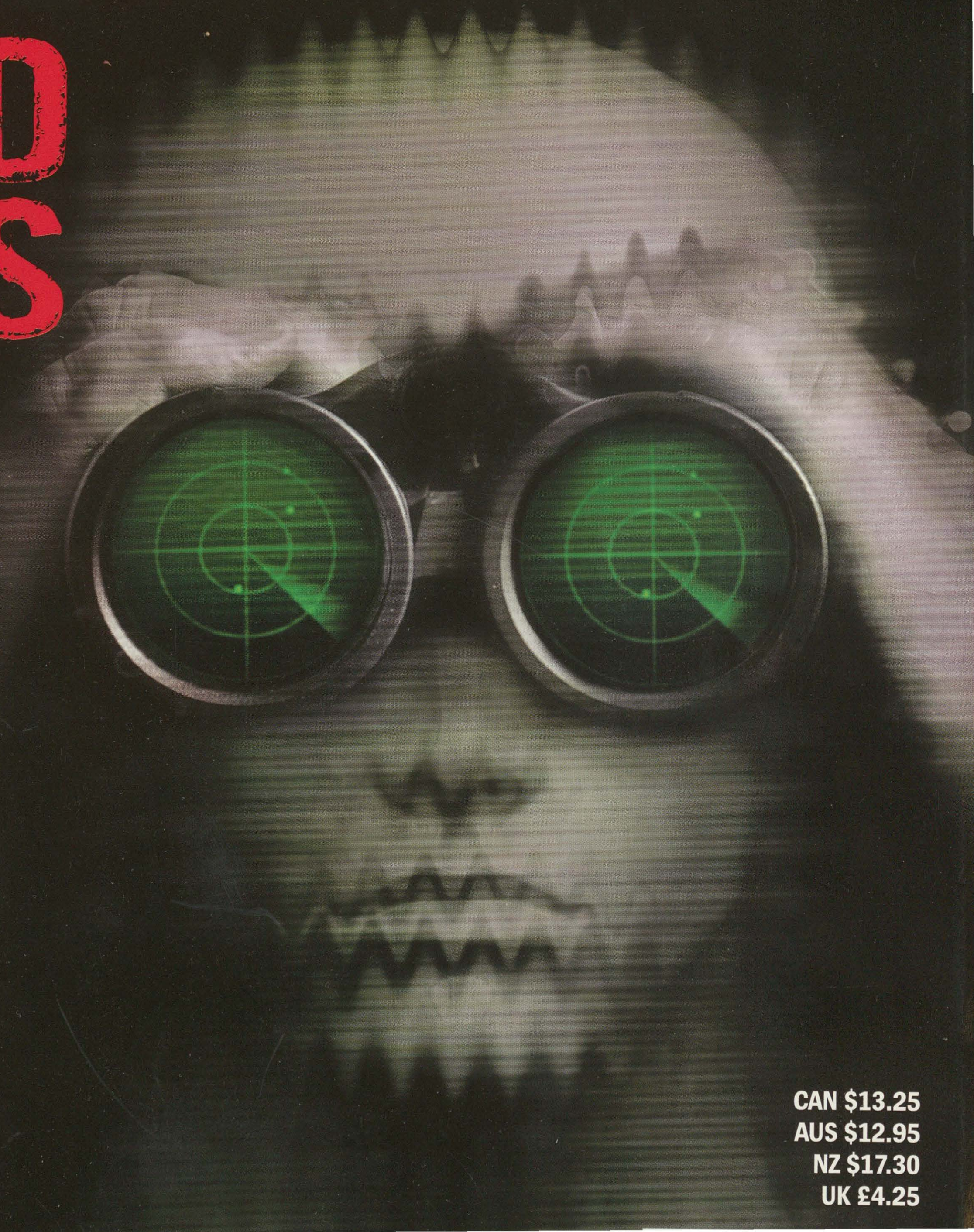

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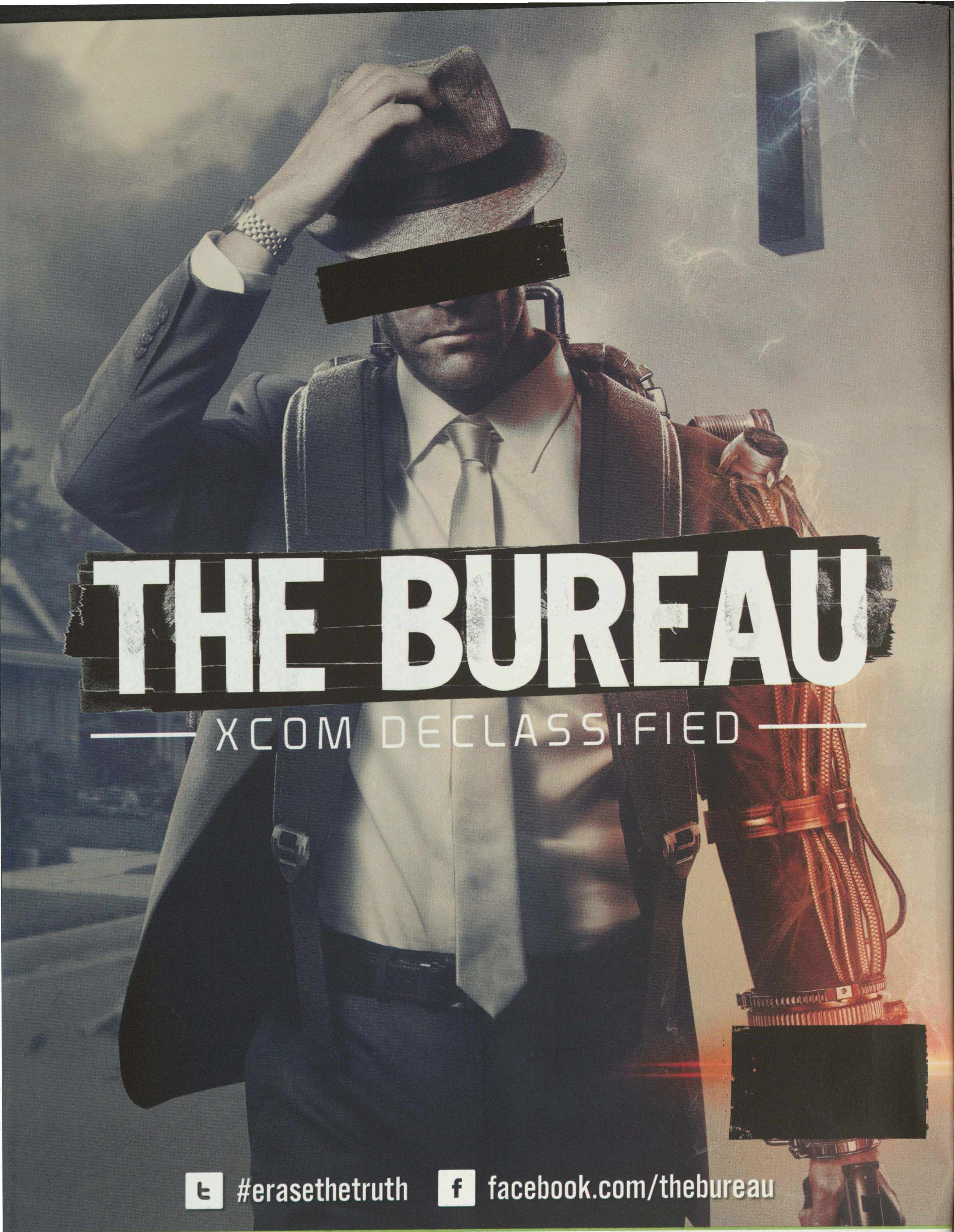
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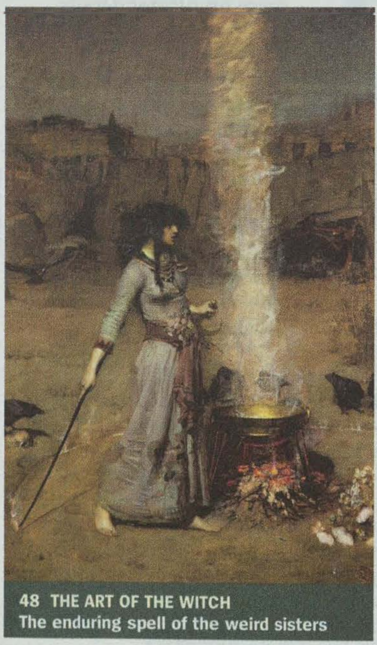
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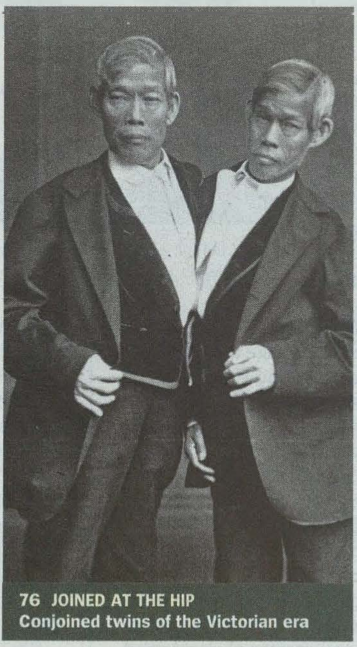
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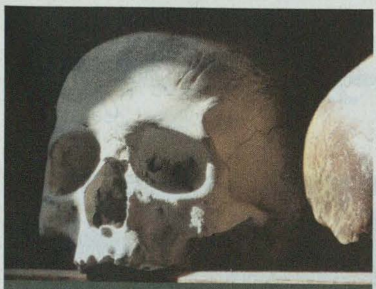
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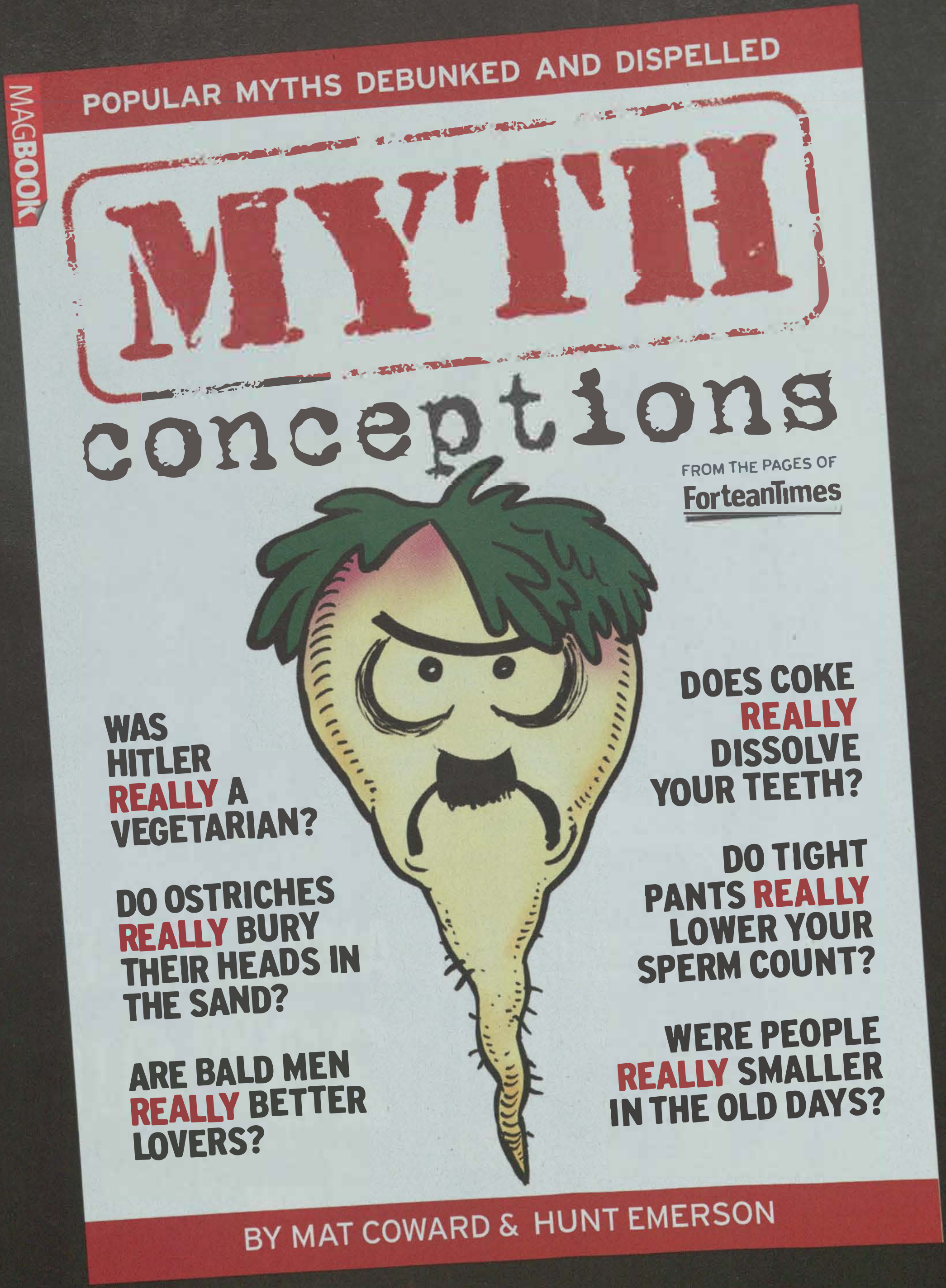

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Fortean Times

EDITOR
DAVID SUTTON
(drsutton@forteantimes.com)
FOUNDING EDITORS
BOB RICKARD (rickard@forteantimes.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)
ART DIRECTOR
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne@forteantimes.com)
BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
VAL STEVENSON
(val@forteantimes.com)
RESIDENT CARTOONIST
HUNT EMERSON
SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
www.subsinfo.co.uk
ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

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LICENSING & SYNDICATION
FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT:
Syndication Senior Manager
ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6132
Anj_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk
Licensing Manager
CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6550
Carlotta_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk
Licensing & Syndication Assistant
NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6134
Nicole_Adams@dennis.co.uk

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DENNIS PUBLISHING,
30 Cleveland Street
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Tel: 020 7907 6000
GROUP PUBLISHER
PAUL RAYNER
020 7907 6663
paul_rayner@dennis.co.uk
CIRCULATION MANAGER
james.mangan@seymour.co.uk
EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER
gareth.viggers@seymour.co.uk
SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE
EBONY BESAGNI
020 7907 6060
ebony_besagni@dennis.co.uk

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
SOPHIE VALENTINE
020 7907 6057
sophie_valentine@dennis.co.uk
DEPUTY ADVERTISING MANAGER
CIARAN SCARRY
020 7907 6683
ciaran_scarry@dennis.co.uk
SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE
RYAN GISBORNE WEAR
020 7907 6763
ryan_gw@dennis.co.uk

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editorial

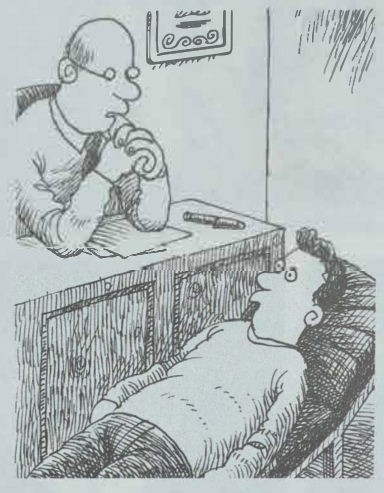
Just because you're paranoid...

DOESN'T MEAN THEY'RE NOT AFTER YOU

Over the years, we have come across a number of accounts by 'Targeted Individuals' (or TIs) concerning what they experience as sustained campaigns of surveillance, harassment or intimidation, often at the hands of law enforcement or intelligence agencies employing non-lethal weapons or forms of mind control. Such reports provoke discussion and much scepticism: after all, the 'symptoms' described by TIs – being followed by mysterious figures, hearing voices, being targeted by harmful yet invisible technologies – often sound remarkably congruent with those experienced by paranoid schizophrenics or those suffering from other delusional disorders. Can they be taken at face value, or do they simply reveal some underlying psychological condition or form of mental illness?

Had we received what became this month's cover story (pp40-47) from an unknown or anonymous source, it's doubtful that it would have found its way into the pages of *Fortean Times*. It was the fact that it came from a regular (and, to the best of our knowledge, perfectly sane) *FT* contributor – writer Robert Guffey, a lecturer at University of Southern California – that got our attention. We appreciate that Robert's account of what has happened to Dion Fuller, one of his closest friends, seems to challenge credulity (and our science columnist David Hambling assesses the claims about extraordinary technologies made by TIs on p45); but, as Robin Ramsay points out in his column (p25), campaigns of deliberate harassment against 'enemies of the state' have always been part of the arsenal of totalitarian regimes like East Germany (just read Anna Funder's quietly terrifying book *Stasiland*) and are most likely now part of the arsenal of intelligence agencies and police forces in the 'democratic' West against 'domestic extremists'. And with recent news stories of unmanned drones to be used in the UK to search for missing hill walkers (*D.Telegraph, D.Mirror, 18 July 2013*), Dion Fuller's account of being followed by small, UFO-like drones starts to sound a whole lot more credible; as to the invisible midgets Dion also described to Robert... well, as ever, we feel that readers can reach their own conclusions after reading this remarkable narrative.

And to demonstrate that claims of gangstalking and technological harassment are not just contemporary issues, we are pleased to present Daniel Wilson's groundbreaking article on *Crook Frightfulness* (pp32-39), undoubtedly one of the oddest books ever written. Its author – whose name is revealed here for the very first time in print – identified himself only as 'A Victim' and was forced to self-publish his uniquely disturbing account of ventriloquial terrorism and acoustic harassment in 1936. Had his experiences taken place in a later era, perhaps they too would have found a place in *FT*.



"So, tell me about these paranoid feelings. Clearly, so that everyone can hear"

MARTIN ROSS

A BLUE PLAQUE FOR CHARLES FORT

It looks as if Charles Fort will at last be getting official recognition, with the placement of a blue plaque at 39 Marchmont Street, London, the address at which Fort lived for most of his sojourn in the British capital. Bob Rickard had lobbied unsuccessfully for such a plaque in the past; an unofficial one has been in place for the past decade, offering a place of pilgrimage for visiting forteans. Now, the Marchmont Association's Blue Plaque Committee has approved a 'proper' blue plaque for Fort. We don't yet have a date for the unveiling, so watch this space for further details.

ERRATA

FT303:89. The perpetual underground fires of Tadzhikistan were wrongly dated to July 1993. The similar fires Bob Rickard meant to report in his 'Tales from the Vault' entry for that date occurred in the Masekwe Valley, in Rusape, in north-eastern Zimbabwe, where the "burning soil" was declared a danger to wildlife.

FT302:19. Dennis Lien of Minneapolis, Minnesota, wrote in to correct a minor error in Robin Ramsey's 'Konspiracy Korner' column, in which Robin "correctly explains the origin of the term 'October surprise', but has a detail wrong: US presidential elections are not 'held in October,' but rather in early November (on the first Tuesday following a Monday in that month). So the most effective 'October surprises' are those sprung in very late October".

DAVIDSUTTON

BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
PAUL SIEVEKING

Why fortean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 78

Why Not Be A Writer?

What our students say:

"**So far, I have had eighteen novels published!** The Writers Bureau helped make this possible for me. Within six months of enrolling on my course I was having work commissioned by editors and I still work regularly for magazines."
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Jane Redfern-Jones.

"I've had **30 pieces** of work accepted by various publications since I started my Writers Bureau course – a mere 18 months ago.

"I contemplate that fact and I am amazed to have come so far in such a short time, especially when I consider the severe restrictions on the time I have available for writing. I usually manage about three hours per week, if I'm lucky."
Chris Green, Lincolnshire

"I have earned **£2,500** this past year, mainly from commissioned pieces. I am now regularly being published and am still only half way through the course."
Marie Barbieri.

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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

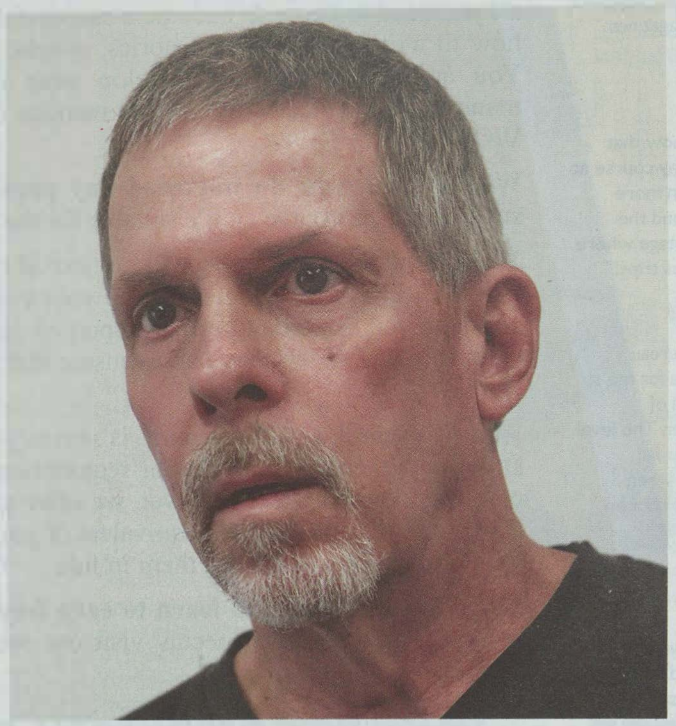
GOD OF THE GEORDIES
Ancient head unearthed at Roman fort in County Durham
PAGE 9

THE SUPER OLDIES
Secrets of longevity from those who should know
PAGE 10

SOLWAY SPACEMAN
Has the mystery of the famous photo finally been solved?
PAGE 28

‘Strongbow’ turns Swedish

Man wakes up with no memory and speaking only Swedish, but is recognised by re-enactors



LEFT: 61-year-old Michael Thomas Boatright woke up as “Johan Ek”.

On 28 February, a man was found unconscious in a room at Motel 6 in Palm Springs, southern California. When he woke up in the emergency room at the Desert Regional Medical Center, he appeared not to understand the nurses’ questions. He had with him a duffel bag of casual athletic clothes, a backpack, five tennis rackets, two cell phones, some cash, a set of old photos, a passport, California identification card, veteran’s medical card and a Social Security card. An address on his passport for a Japanese woman believed to be his ex-wife was a dead end – as were all the telephone numbers listed on his cell phones. His ID showed he was 61-year-old Michael Thomas Boatwright, born in Florida, who served in the US Navy from 1971 to 1973 – but the soft-spoken man didn’t recognise his own photograph or his reflection in a mirror. He spoke only Swedish and said his name was Johan Ek. He said he remembered nothing about his life before. “The guy Michael – it wasn’t me. I’m still Johan,” he said through a translator in a recent hospital interview, twisting his water bottle around in his hands.

On 13 March, doctors diagnosed a case of dissociative global amnesia that could last for months and had probably been brought on by some sort of traumatic event. On 15 July, after he had been in the medical centre for 19 weeks, his sister Michelle Brewer was located in Louisiana. She hadn’t heard from him for about 10 years. “He’s always been just a wanderer,” she said. “He’d come back when he needed some money or something from somebody. Then he’d take off again.”

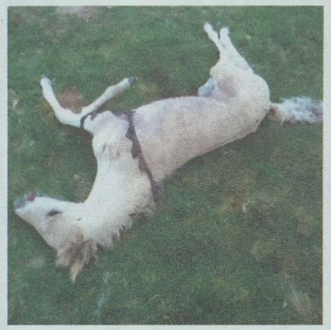
Lisa Hunt-Vasquez, the social worker assigned to track down relatives and help piece Boatwright’s life back together, discovered that he was a 3D graphic designer who taught English in Japan for 10 years and then in China for four. He left his teaching post a year before his apparent memory loss. He flew into Palm Springs from Hong Kong on 24 February – the last day valid on his Chinese visa. Two days later he walked into the Marriott Hotel in Palm Desert, asking for a job as a tennis coach, but the hotel was fully staffed and couldn’t offer him a job. Two days after that, he was found unconscious and woke up with his memory ostensibly erased. He has no insurance or income, so Desert Regional has funded his stay, but Hunt-Vasquez is worried that he might not be able to stay there much longer because, despite his apparent amnesia, he is healthy. He could end up living on the streets. He says that his daily life is a living hell. “Walk in my shoes for one day,” he said. “You’ll experience the nightmare of a lifetime.” Either his brain has malfunctioned – or he is enacting an elaborate charade, pretending that he had forgotten his past and how to speak English for reasons that are not yet understood.

Records show that Boatwright lived in Sweden on and off between 1981 and 2003. Swedish members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, an international mediæval re-enactment society, provided more information. They said that Boatwright – known to them as ‘Strongbow’ – had been a keen participant in the group’s jousting team in the 1980s and early 1990s. “He was pretty good at jousting – one of the better performers,” said SCA member Johan Cassel. “He could speak pretty good Swedish, although you could hear that he came from an English-speaking country. He had an accent.” Cassel recalled that Strongbow was friendly with a man called Ragnvald Göransson Ek, which might explain where the name ‘Johan Ek’ came from.

Mike Adams of NaturalNews.com speculates that Boatwright is a mind-control subject – “an ex-Jason Bourne whose mind was wiped clean so that he could exit the program” – or is suffering from some sort of extreme multiple personality disorder. He goes on to say: “Yet another seemingly far-fetched possibility is that the body of Boatwright has somehow been taken over by the spirit of Johan Ek. Maybe this is some sort of grand cosmic ‘glitch in the Matrix’, where souls get mixed up due to a cosmic buffer overrun error. And maybe somewhere in Sweden there’s a guy who woke up and swears he’s Michael Boatwright!”
mydesert.com, 6+19 July; npr.org, 16 July; [AP] 16 July; D.Mail, 17 July; Independent, naturalnews.com, 18 July; Palm Springs (CA) Desert Sun, 21 July 2013.

Supermoon sacrifice

Mutilated Pony found dead on Dartmoor sparks claims of Satanic ritual



SWNS.COM

At about 6.50pm on Tuesday, 23 July 2013, a rider came upon the body of a two-month-old foal in Yennadon Down, a popular picnic area in Devon National Park. It was in a secluded clearing at the foot of a slope facing south-west towards the Full Moon; its genitals and right ear had been sliced off and tongue and eyes cut out – possibly while still alive. Its belly had been hacked open and it had traces of white paint on one of its legs. Around it was a series of scorch marks, possibly from lit torches or candles.

Jenny Thornton, an animal welfare officer on Dartmoor, believes the pony was killed on the night of Monday, 22 July, during the “Supermoon” – when a Full Moon comes closest to Earth, making it appear much larger and brighter than usual. It was among a herd of animals owned by local farmers but allowed to run wild on the common land. In the nearby village of Yelverton, some local people were insisting the evidence pointed to the involvement of a cult.

The police said they had been called to three similar incidents in the past year; indeed, there is a history of animal sacrifices in the south-west of England. In June, two horses were found with gaping knife wounds in neighbouring fields in the village of Stokeinteignhead, Devon. Last year, a horse was found dead in Falmouth after a Full Moon. One of its eyes had been gouged out, its teeth removed and its genitalia hacked off. On 26 June 2006, a day after a Full Moon, the bodies of three mutilated sheep were found arranged in a line on moorland near Pork Hill, Dartmoor. The previous October, again shortly after a Full Moon, six sheep mutilated in the same way were found near Sampford Spiney, West Dartmoor. They were arranged in a pentacle (**FT215:18-19**).

Per Faxneld, an expert in contemporary Satanism at the University of Stockholm, said the latest mutilation was unlikely to have been carried out by an “established Satanist group”, adding: “Most of them are averse to animal sacrifice. But there are some smaller Satanist groups that do sacrifice animals.” He pointed out that “one of the most extreme Satanist groups in the world,” the ONA (Order of Nine Angles), which has even called for human sacrifices, is based in Cornwall.
D.Telegraph, 26+27 July; websleuths.com, 26 July 2013.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT’S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BICYCLE SWALLOWED BY TREE IN WASHINGTON

ABC News, —Jan 2013.

Let’s not lose our native tongue in outer space

Irish Times, 21 Feb 2013.

Potholes cancel parade

Irish Times, 21 Feb 2013.

Dead whistleblower to go on trial in Russia

Evening Standard (London), 18 Feb 2013.

Catherine’s ‘demons’ helped her play doctor

Mail on Sunday, 3 Mar 2013.

HOMOPHOBIC GHOST DRIVES OUT LESBIANS

Sun, 13 Jan 2013.

Man arrested for harassing manatee

<i> 21 Feb 2013.

Museum manager suspended over statue to Thatcher

Independent, 9 Feb 2013,

Cop killer worried about God’s love

Toronto Star, 13 Feb 2013.

SIDELINES...

CURB ON WITCHES

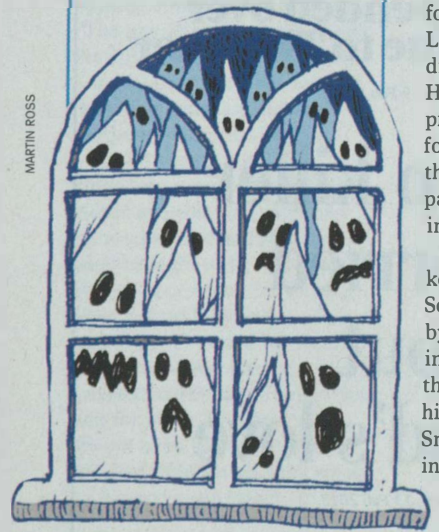
Airspace rules in Swaziland have been tightened. Broomsticks must stay below an altitude of 150m (492ft), or witches could be fined up to 500,000 rand (£35,000), warned Sabelo Dlamini of the African country's Civil Aviation Authority. The new law also forbids toy helicopters and kites from ascending too high. *MX News (Sydney), 16 May; Sunday Times, 19 May 2013.*

BEGINNER'S LUCK

Wesley Carrington bought a basic metal detector for £135 and headed out to woods near St Albans, Hertfordshire. Within 20 minutes he had unearthed 55 Roman *solidi* – gold coins – dating back to the late fourth/early fifth century. Experts later returned to the site and found a further 104 *solidi*. The find was declared treasure trove and estimated to be worth at least £100,000. Proceeds will be divided between Mr Carrington and the landowner. *D.Mail, 6 June 2013.*

SPOOK CENTRAL

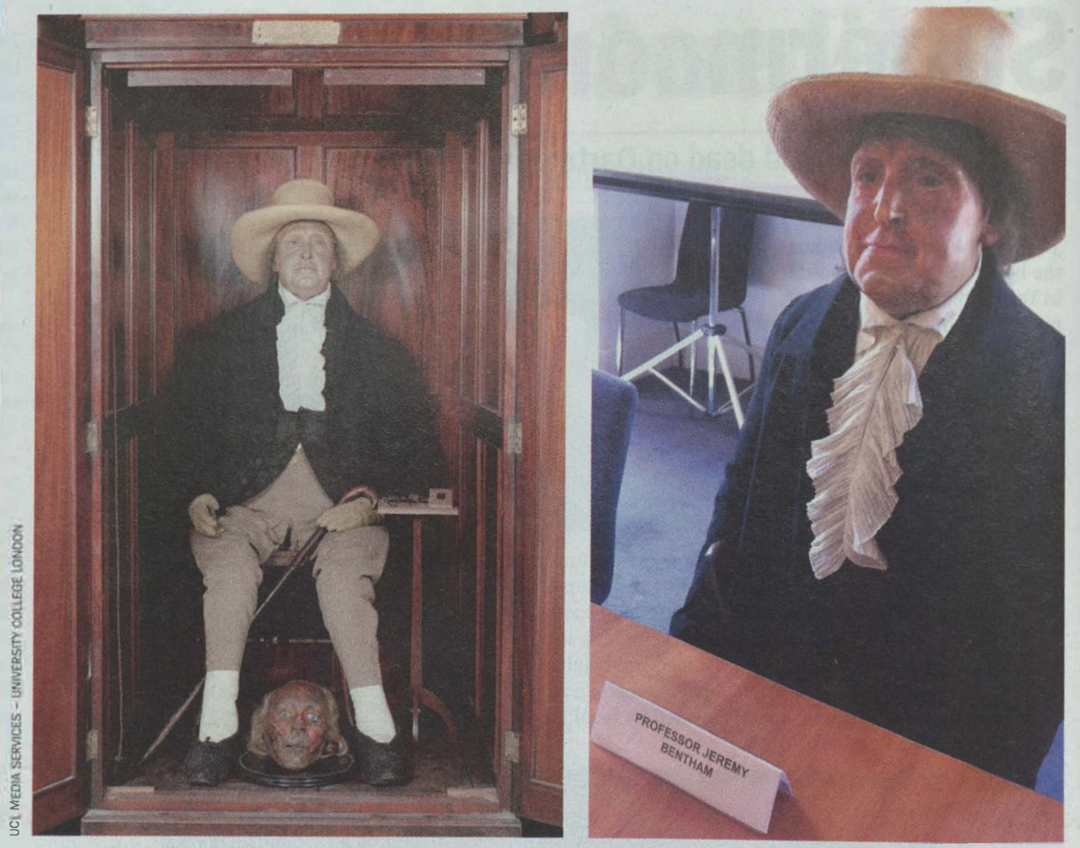
After Wymering Manor in Portsmouth – said to be haunted by as many as 30 ghosts – failed to reach its reserve price of £375,000 at auction, the city council gave it to the Wymering Manor Trust to open as a tourist attraction, with £30,000 towards the cost of restoration, estimated to be £500,000. *D.Telegraph, 9 Feb 2013.*



MARTIN ROSS

Bentham: not voting

UCL's philosopher is wheeled out for yet another meeting



UCL MEDIA SERVICES – UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

LEFT: The utilitarian Mr Bentham in his cabinet. RIGHT: And keeping typically schtumm at a recent Council meeting.

Jeremy Bentham, generally regarded as the founder of utilitarianism, has also been described as the "spiritual founder" of University College London, though he played little direct part in its foundation. He decreed that his body be preserved as an "auto-icon", and following his death in 1832 at the age of 84, his skeleton was padded out with hay and dressed in his clothes.

The auto-icon, initially kept by his disciple Thomas Southwood Smith, was acquired by University College London in 1850. Bentham had intended the auto-icon to incorporate his actual head, but Southwood Smith's efforts at mummification, involving placing the head under an air pump over sulphuric acid and simply drawing off the fluids, left the head looking macabre, with dried and darkened skin stretched tautly over the skull. The body was therefore given a wax head, fitted with some of Bentham's own hair. For many years, the real head (with glass eyes) was displayed in the same glass-fronted cabinet as the auto-icon at the end of the South Cloisters in the main building of the college – but it became the target of repeated student pranks and is now locked away in the Conservation Safe at the Institute of Archæology.

There is an urban legend that the auto-icon is regularly wheeled into the Council Room to attend College Council meetings, with the words "Jeremy Bentham – present but not voting" recorded in the minutes. Another version of the story asserts that the auto-icon does vote (always for the motion), but only on occasions when the votes of the other Council members are equally split. The legend, however, is not entirely fanciful: the auto-icon did indeed attend Council meetings in 1926 and 1976, on the centenary and the 150th anniversary of the college's foundation.

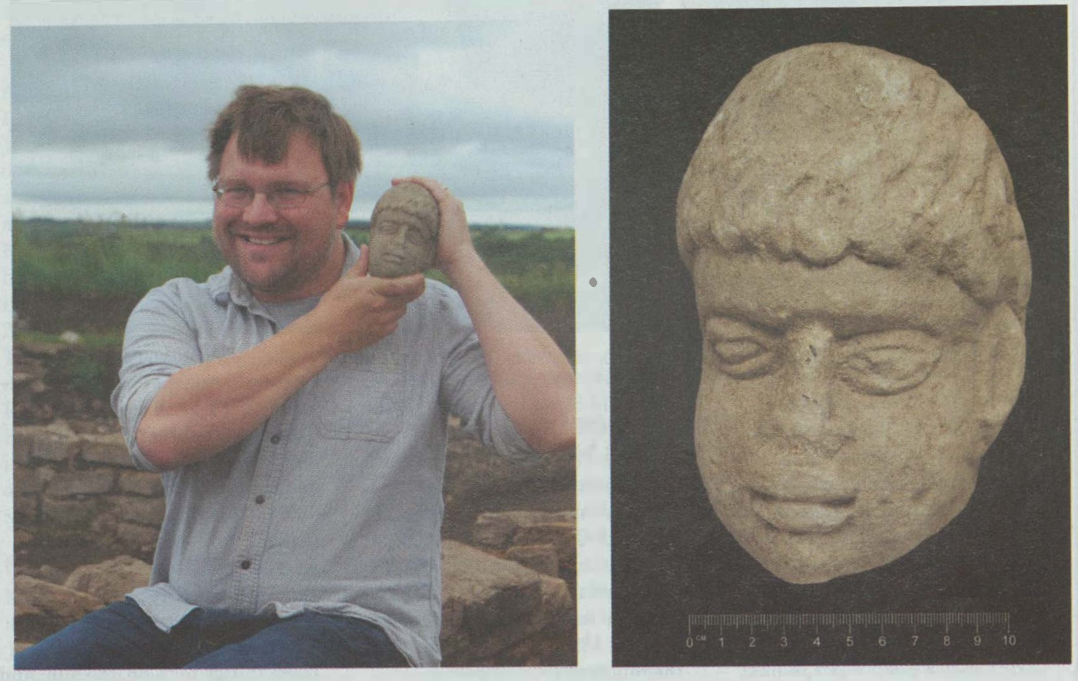
The old gent was trundled into a third Council meeting on 9 July this year, the last to be attended by the retiring Provost, Sir Malcolm Grant.

It took three people to get Mr B out of his cabinet and, as he is bolted to his chair, he was moved in one piece.

The auto-icon can be seen by the public, Monday to Friday, between 7.30am and 6pm. *Metro, 12 July 2013.*

A Geordie Roman god

The head of a Celtic deity is found in an old rubbish dump

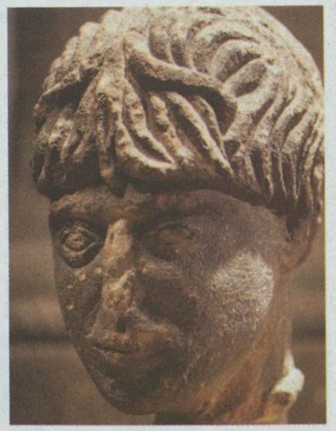


PHOTOS COURTESY OF DURHAM UNIVERSITY

ABOVE: Dr David Petts at Binchester Roman fort with the newly unearthed head, which supposedly looks a lot like Boris Johnson. BELOW: The head of Antenociticus, a deity worshipped only in the north of England, found at Benwell in 1862.

A carved stone head of a possible 'Geordie' Roman god has been found in an ancient rubbish dump. The 8in (20cm) sandstone head, dating from the second or third century AD, was discovered by archæology student Alex Kirton, 19, at Binchester Roman fort near Bishop Auckland in County Durham, as his team dug through an old bath house. Binchester – known to the Romans as Vinovia – was once the largest Roman fort in County Durham. Sited on the main Roman road between the legionary headquarters at York and Hadrian's Wall, it controlled an important crossing point over the River Wear.

Dr David Petts, a lecturer in archæology at Durham University, said the head was discovered close to where a small Roman altar was found two years ago. It is similar to the Celtic deity Antenociticus, thought to have been worshipped locally as a source of inspiration and intercession in military affairs. A similar sandstone head, complete with a description identifying it as Antenociticus – and with hair curling forward, looking like two horns – was found at Benwell, Newcastle upon Tyne, in 1862. Fragments of a forearm and a lower leg were also found, suggesting the head was part of a life-sized statue. The small temple to Antenociticus, built in about AD 178–80, stood in the civilian settlement outside Benwell (Condercum) Fort, one of 13 permanent forts added to the line of Hadrian's Wall during its construction.



"Antenociticus is one of a number of gods known only from the northern frontier, a region which seems to have had a number of its own deities," said Dr Petts. "Antenociticus is not mentioned at any other Romano-British site or on any inscriptions from Europe, which is why it has been identified as a local deity." *FT* correspondent Bobby Zodiac points out that Binchester is less than 30 miles (48km) from Hexham in Northumberland, famous for its supposedly 'spooky' Hexham Heads, possibly of Celtic origin [**FT294:42–47, 295:44–49**]. Simon Green, writing to *Private Eye*, said the Binchester head "bears a startling resemblance to Boris Johnson", the Mayor of London. *[PA], Guardian, D.Express, 4 July; Private Eye, 12 July 2013.*

SIDELINES...

HIDDEN TALENT

Economics student Pooja Soni, 18, from Delhi, was told she would have to re-sit an exam because she had written it in invisible ink. She denied it. "Why on earth would I do that?" she said. *Metro, 3 June 2013.*

NO JOKE

A joke 'severed fist' prompted a murder hunt by hundreds of police. The prop was left on a car dashboard and spotted by a motorist who thought it was real. After the vehicle was traced to a car park in Mainz, Germany, the owner faced a £20,000 bill for the cost of the search. *Metro, 25 Mar 2013.*

EAU DE EWW

Two Indonesian schoolgirls – Dwi Nailul Izzah and Tintya Aprianti Miki – have won a prestigious science prize for making a liquid air freshener from cow manure. They left the dung to ferment for three days, then extracted water and mixed it with coconut water. The distilled liquid has a "natural aroma of herbs". *MX News (Sydney), 12 Mar 2013.*

I WILL SURVIVE

A Jack Russell terrier poisoned and buried alive was saved when a man saw the ground "wiggle". The little dog was described as "flat as a pancake" when it was rescued in Charleville-Mézières, northern France. *<i> 20 Oct 2012.*

HAMSTER RESURRECTION

James Davis and his girlfriend were looking after Tink, their friends' hamster, in Painswick, Gloucestershire, when they found her lying in her cage. Thinking she was dead, they buried her one foot (30cm) down in a flowerbed before ringing their friends with the sad news. The next day, Good Friday, they rang again to say that Tink had risen from the grave. Overnight, she had dug herself out and taken shelter in a box as the temperature fell below freezing. *Metro, D.Telegraph, 11 April 2013.*

SIDELINES...

BAD BIRD!

Peter Leach from Glasgow was taking photographs at Arthur's Pass on New Zealand's South Island on 30 December 2012 when a kea (a large parrot) sneaked into his campervan, snatched a small cloth bag containing £700 holiday cash, and flew off. Mr Leach was left with just the change in his pocket. Keas have a reputation for opening rubbish bins, damaging furniture and vandalising cars. *Sydney Morning Herald, 4 Feb 2013.*

CHILD OF THE DAWN

According to the *International Herald Tribune* (1 Aug 2012): "An Inca girl who lived 500 million years ago suffered from a bacterial lung infection just before she died..." It must have been lonely in those days, with only protozoa for company.

SWEETCORN SURPRISE

When Suna Canatar, 50, of Charlton, south-east London, opened a can of Princes sweetcorn, she found a caterpillar "as big as my finger". *Metro, 26 Mar 2013.*

CROC CHAMPION

Frenchman Yoann Galeran, 29, took a nocturnal swim in the waters off Arnem Land in Northern Australia and was suddenly dragged underwater with his head in the jaws of a crocodile, which tried to drown him in a death roll. He managed to survive by battering the 10ft (3m) reptile under its head with his fists and pushing it away. He was treated for puncture wounds. *D.Mail, 23 April 2013.*

MARTIN ROSS

Super-centenarians

A LACK OF NOSINESS AND A QUIET LIFE MIGHT HELP YOU LIVE LONGER

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

GETTY IMAGES

The late Antisa Khvichava (**LEFT**), who was born in 1880, and Misao Okawa (**RIGHT**), whose children are in their nineties.

ANTISA KHVICHAVA
132 YRS 91 DAYS

This woman from the remote village of Sachino in western Georgia had Soviet era documents showing she was born on 8 July 1880, though her actual birth certificate was lost and she was never officially recognised as the world's oldest person [**FT267:23**]. She never went to school to learn Georgian and spoke only the local language, Mingrelian. She retired from her job as a tea and corn picker in 1965 when she was allegedly 85. She had one son, 10 or 12 grandchildren, 12 or 18 great-grandchildren and four or six great-great-grandchildren. Two children from a previous marriage starved to death in World War II. She died on 7 October 2012 and thousands turned out for her funeral.

BESSE COOPER
116YRS 99 DAYS

Cooper was born in Tennessee on 27 August 1896 and moved to Georgia during World War I to look for work as a teacher. She married Luther in 1924 and they had four children. Asked about her longevity, she said: "I mind my own business and I don't eat junk food." After her death, her son said: "She never worried". In January 2011 Guinness certified her as the world's oldest person.

She died at a nursing home in Monroe, near Atlanta, Georgia, on 4 December 2012.

JIROEMON KIMURA
116YRS 54 DAYS

Mr Kimura, certified by Guinness and the Gerontology Research Group as the world's oldest living person, died of pneumonia on 12 June 2013. He was born in western Japan on 19 April 1897 and lived through the reigns of four emperors and the administrations of 61 prime ministers. He worked as a postman until he was 65 and then helped on his son's farm until he was 90. Asked about his great age, he said: "Maybe it's all thanks to the Sun above me. I am always looking up towards the sky, that is how I am." At other times he attributed his longevity to a diet of steamed fish, rice and red bean curd; early rising, exercise, not smoking, and his efforts to keep his mind fit. Four of his siblings lived beyond the age of 90, and his youngest brother died aged 100. He had seven (or five) children, 14 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren and 13 (or 14 or 15) great-great-grandchildren. His last days were spent at home in Kyotango City, Kyoto prefecture, under the care of the 60-year-old widow of one of his grandsons.

- All the press reports seen at Fortean Towers billed Mr Kimura as the oldest man who ever lived; all journalists appear to have forgotten another Japanese farmer, Shigechiyo Izumi, who died on 21 February 1986 at the Guinness-approved age of 120 years and 237 days [**FT47:54–55, 48:64**]. This tiny man – 4ft 8in (142cm) tall – was born in the reign of the last Shogun on 29 June 1865, and appeared in the 1871 census as a six-year-old. His advice was not to worry and to leave things to "God, the Sun, and Buddha". He gave up smoking at 116, but continued his daily shot of Shochu (sugar cane liquor). After he turned 100, his white hair returned to black at his temples, a phenomenon known as anamelanism.

To keep her memory alive, we must also mention once again the oldest *person* whose age is beyond doubt: Jeanne Calment, who died in France in 1997 aged 122 years and 164 days.

MARIA VALENTIM
114 YRS 347 DAYS

In May 2012, Guinness discovered that Maria Gomes Valentim was born on 9 July 1896, 48 days before Besse Cooper, making her 'officially' the oldest woman, but she died soon after, on 21 June. She was born in the hillside town of Carangola in the southeast of Brazil, and lived there all her life. She attributed her longevity to a quiet life and (like Cooper) "minding my own business". Known to family and friends as Grannie Quita, she was fond of lots of pepper on her food, fried bananas and a nap after lunch. She loved a good helping of feijoada, a bean stew with various cuts of salted pork. Up to three months before her death, she was partial to a small glass of wine. Married at 16, she had been a widow since 1946. The eldest of six, she had outlived all her siblings and her only son.

After Cooper's death last December, Dina Manfredini of Johnston, Iowa, held the title of oldest woman for 13 days until she passed away on 17 December, aged 115. The title transferred to Koto Okubo, a Japanese woman born on 24 Dec 1897, who died in Kawasaki City on 12 January 2013, aged 115 years and 19 days. The oldest woman in the US had died a few days earlier: Mamie Rearden, a mother of 11 from Edgefield, South Carolina, died in Augusta, Georgia, three weeks after breaking her hip in a fall. She was 114.

MISAO OKAWA, 114+

Ms Okawa, a descendant of kimono merchants in the Japanese city of Osaka, is now officially the world's oldest living woman. She was born on 5 March 1898 and married in 1919. She has never suffered any serious illness. She had three children, two of whom are still alive in their 90s, four grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

GHAHREMAN PARDIS, 113+

Pardis was born in Azerbaijan but now lives in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. His original passport states he was born on 2 November 1903, but his family says his birth date was altered in Iran and that he was really born on 2 November 1899. When he lived in Iran he was a keen sportsman, excelling in boxing, wrestling, football, volleyball and basketball. His contribution to the country, not just as a champion boxer but also helping to develop sports centres, was so great that when his time for national service came, the government in Tehran reportedly lowered his age so he could continue his good work. He and his wife Maryam had four children and came to Aylesbury in the 1980s, having moved to London when he was 65, to be with family already in England. His daughter Shohreh said he was a skilled actor, dancer and singer.

OTHER CONTENDERS

James Emmanuel 'Doc' Sisnett died in Barbados on 23 May 2013, aged 113 years and 90 days. Of course, there are always gnarled folk who claim to be much older than the 'official' record holders. In March 2011, Rebecca Lanier – born into a family of slaves in the US Deep South – supposedly celebrated her 119th birthday, but her age can't be verified as her parents were never given a birth certificate. In May 2011, Juana Bautista de la Candelaria from Cuba was photographed showing her identity card that appeared to show she was 126.

In June 2011, Brazil's National Institute of Social Security (INSS) announced the discovery of a woman from the Kaxinawa indigenous ethnic group who appeared to be aged 120. The birth certificate of Marie Lucimer Pereira states she was born on 3 September 1890. She had lived most of her life in a remote region of the northwest state of Acre, and spoke only a few words of Portuguese. Her diet included banana porridge, grilled monkey and fish, but she avoided salt and sugar. She had 10 children and 22 grandchildren. We have not heard if the Gerontology Research Group has investigated her age, or whether she is still alive.

In October 2011, six years after his first wife died, former cart driver Hazi Abdul Noor married 60-year-old Samoi Bibi in Satghori, a remote village in Assam. Of the 500 guests, around 100 were his immediate family – two sons, four daughters, their spouses and descendants. Mr Noor was said to be 120, making him the world's oldest bridegroom. Two weeks later, another report reduced his age to 105.

Magomed Labazanov, an illiterate former sawmill worker, died in Russia in September 2012 at the reputed age of 122, although he had no documentation to prove his age. He said the secret of long life was "abstaining from alcohol, tobacco and women" – in short, not having fun. He also recommended a "proper diet" that included whey and wild garlic – "the true nourishment for centenarians".

Mariam Amash, an Arab-Israeli woman, died in December 2012 at the reputed age of 124, leaving 10 children and 300 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Her Israeli identity card stated she was born in 1888.

For *FT*'s last round-up of super-centenarians, see **FT267:23**.

KYOTANGO CITY GOVERNMENT VIA GETTY IMAGES

Jiroemon Kimura (**ABOVE**) attributed his longevity to the Sun.

SOURCES

Amash: *Canberra Times*, 24 Dec 2012. **Candelaria:** *Metro*, 27 May 2011. **Cooper:** *BBC News*, 27 Aug 2011, 5 Dec 2012. **Kimura:** *D.Telegraph*, 27 Dec; *Independent*, 28 Dec 2012; *BBC News*, 19 April; *Guardian*, 13 June 2013. **Khvichava:** *Metro, Sun*, 8 Oct 2013. **Labazanov:** *MX News (Sydney)*, 12 Sept; *TNT magazine*, 17 Sept 2012. **Lanier:** *D.Mirror*, 26 Mar 2011. **Noor:** *Times of India, via D.Mail*, 27 Oct; *Sun*, 12 Nov 2013. **Okawa:** *Irish Examiner, (Sydney) D.Telegraph*, 28 Feb 2013. **Okubo:** *Metro*, 14 Jan 2013. **Pereira:** *Al Jazeera blogs*, 25 June; *D.Mirror*, 31 Aug 2011. **Rearden:** *Irish Independent*, 7 Jan 2013. **Sisnett:** *Canberra Times*, 25 May 2013. **Pardis:** *Bucks Herald*, 9 Jan; *D.Mirror*, 13 June 2013. **Valentim:** *Irish Times*, 23 June 2011.

SIDELINES...

WILD NIGHT OUT

A 25-year-old Pole fell and passed out, then became aware of being in pain when he awoke. Unable to recall what had happened, he walked to his car, looked in a mirror and saw a screwdriver penetrating his forehead just above his right eye. He smoked a cigarette before calling a neighbour, who took him to hospital. The screwdriver was removed in a three-hour operation. It was lodged about 2in (5cm) inside the man's head, but did not damage his eyes or brain. *D.Telegraph, 9 Mar 2013.*

ITCH WAS BLADE

Canadian Billy McNeely from Fort Good Hope, Northwest Territories, Canada, was scratching what he thought was an old itch when it turned out to be a 7cm (2.7in) knife blade buried in his back for almost three years. He rushed to hospital, where it was removed. In April 2010, he was stabbed five times in a fight; a doctor stitched him up but took no X-rays. McNeely always wondered why he set off security metal detectors. *Times Colonist (Victoria BC), 21 Mar 2013.*

STARED DOWN

A two-year experiment at Newcastle University found that bicycle racks with pictures of staring eyes placed above them had 62 per cent fewer thefts that in the previous year, while those without eye pictures recorded a 63 per cent increase. *[R] 24 April 2013.*

SEAL ADVENTURES

In March a seal pup crossed a busy road to spend the night outside the Talk of the Town nightclub in Herne Bay, Kent. It was taken to a pier and released. In May, another seal pup was found in a Swedish forest, almost four miles (6.4km) from the nearest water. Tracks in the snow showed it had made its own way there. It was taken to the Dalälven river and released. *D.Telegraph, 14 Mar, 25 May 2013.*

SIDELINES...

ELEPHANT BLESSING

Praful Visram, 61, owner of 4 Seasons Catering in Leicester, noticed an aubergine that resembled Ganesh, the Hindu elephant god of wisdom and prosperity, so he placed it in the company's temple. By the time of the report, 80 people had come to pray to the holy veg. It had begun to rot and was to be given a traditional Hindu funeral. *Sunday Times, 12 May 2013.* For a Muslim aubergine in Leicester in 1990, with seeds spelling out "Yah-Allah" in Arabic, see **FT55:4-5**.

CATCH SNATCHED

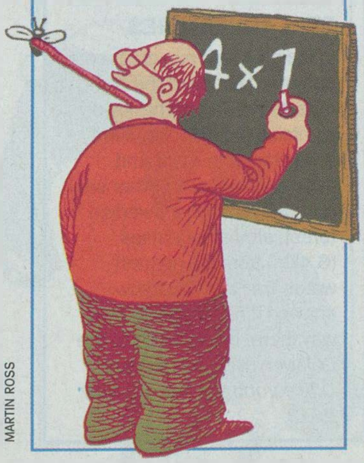
Clem Carter was leading an angling trip off Portland Bill in Dorset when one of his party landed a plaice – only for it to be snaffled by an 8ft (2.4m) porbeagle shark. *Metro, 24 May 2013.*

PAYING TO BREATHE

Last February, Chinese millionaire Chen Guangbiao sold eight million cans of air at 5 yuan (51p) each during 10 days of severe air pollution. Chen, who made his fortune in recycling, said the air came from far-flung, pristine regions such as Xinjiang. *D.Telegraph, 2 Feb 2013.*

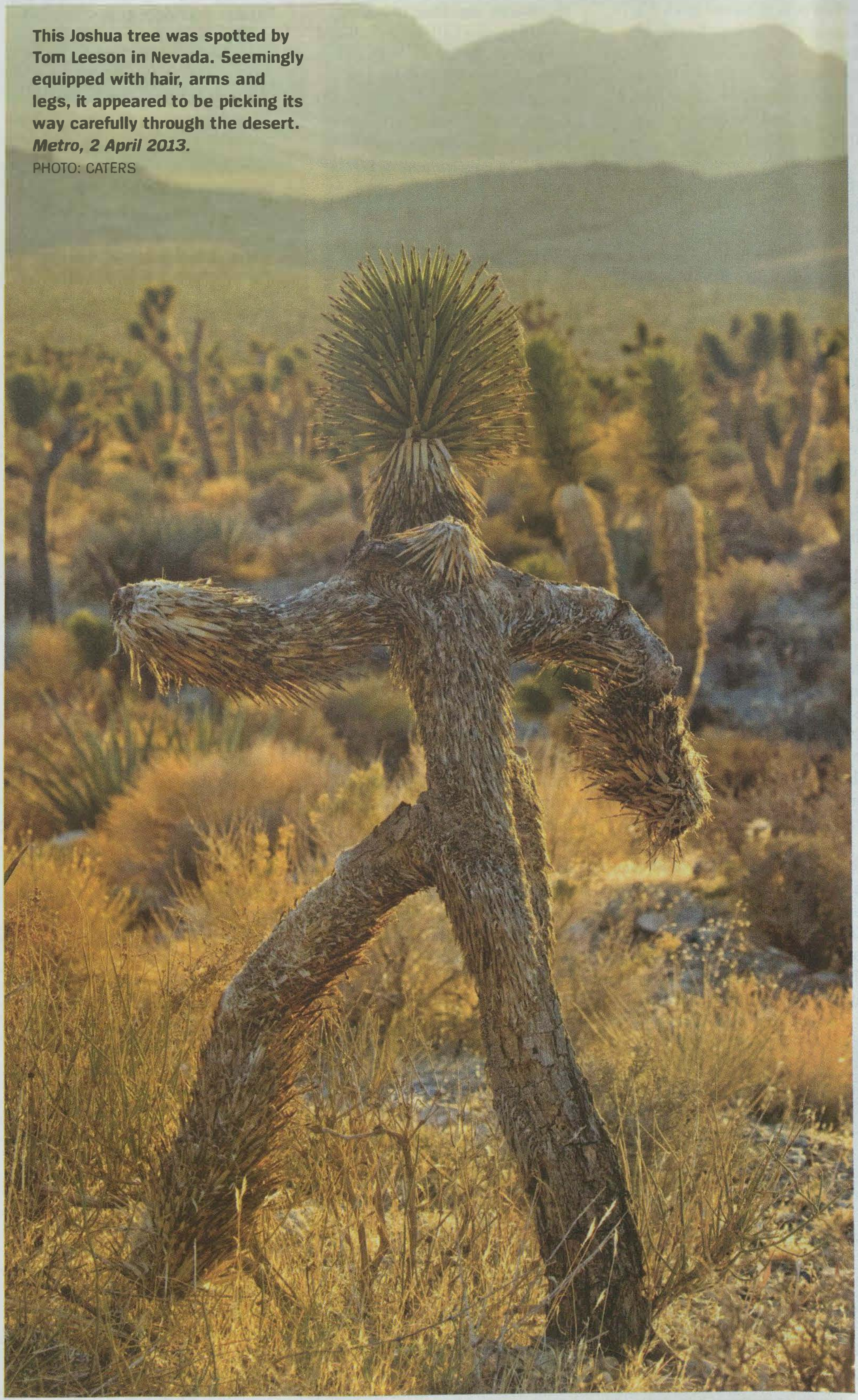
CRUNCHY CRITTERS

A teacher addicted to eating insects has scoffed 5,000 species – including cockroaches and scorpions – in 11 years. David Gracer, 47, keeps a supply in his basement freezer in Rhode Island. *Metro, 3 May 2013.*



MARTIN ROSS

STEPPING OUT...



This Joshua tree was spotted by Tom Leeson in Nevada. Seemingly equipped with hair, arms and legs, it appeared to be picking its way carefully through the desert. ***Metro, 2 April 2013.***

PHOTO: CATERS

MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE examines hauntings seemingly triggered by the presence of human remains

UNQUIET GRAVES, PART ONE

In July, the unearthing of decapitated skeletons near Gliwicz in Poland was widely cited as another example of a 'vampire grave' from Eastern Europe, coming just over a year since the announcement of the discovery of staked bodies at an excavation at Sozopol, Bulgaria, in June 2012 [**FT291:20**]. In the Polish interment, the skulls had been removed and placed at the feet, whilst in the Bulgarian case iron rods were found driven through the rib-cages. In both cases experts proposed that these were precautions to prevent the dead rising from their graves. Other examples have been found in the Czech Republic, including an entire 'vampire cemetery' at Celakovice near Prague (*Independent, 6 June 2012; D.Telegraph, 11 July 2013*). Concerning the Polish find, it was left to Leo Hickman in the *Guardian* (16 July 2013) to argue that there "could be a less spooky explanation", suggesting that the skeletons were actually those of executed criminals and not vampires.

Mr Hickman added that "the *Guardian* adopts a firmly sceptical position on the undead." Unfortunately, this declaration may not provide the complete reassurance that he hopes. The belief that those denied proper funeral rites might haunt the living unless or until proper rituals are performed is an exceedingly deep-rooted one, found in many cultures throughout history. Indeed, the belief that the presence of human remains at a site can trigger a haunting is still thriving in modern Britain and has featured in two ghost reports this year already.

GETTY IMAGES

In March the discovery of what are believed to be human bones under a car park near Godalming railway station in Surrey sparked memories of a haunting experienced by a local family who lived nearby in a house known as Priory Orchard. The bones were unearthed during an archæological survey conducted on behalf of Waverley Borough Council, which is pulling down Priory Orchard as part of affordable housing development. Following the report in the *Surrey Advertiser* of the discovery of "a number of skeletons thought to be human" (one wonders what else they could possibly be!), the paper was contacted by Miss Chelsea Whiteman, 22, who had lived in Priory Orchard with her parents, seven brothers and four sisters. The family occupied the house for six months while their current home was being extended.

Miss Whiteman told the press: "Before we moved [there] we were very sceptical about ghosts, but experiencing all these strange happenings at Priory Orchard has changed all of our minds... The first time I noticed something, I was in the house alone while the rest of my family were out at school and work. I could hear children laughing, talking and moving about upstairs and I knew none of my siblings were at home to make the noises."

Her parents dismissed this at first, but were forced to conclude something strange was going on in the house after a tap in the bathroom was repeatedly turned on, windows were mysteriously opened and a heavy cot in their bedroom was repeatedly moved to the centre of the room. Given the nature of the incidents and the size of the family, one might attribute these events to an outbreak of poltergeist activity in a crowded house – perhaps a rather serious one as Miss Whiteman's three-year-old brother said the ghost had once pushed him downstairs. However, of more significance regarding the discovery of the skeletons is Miss Whiteman's claim to have had recurring dreams of someone buried under the house, "which would really play on my mind the next day". Fortunately, the Whitemans have encountered no problems in their new home.

MISS WHITEMAN HAD RECURRING DREAMS OF SOMEONE BURIED UNDER THE HOUSE

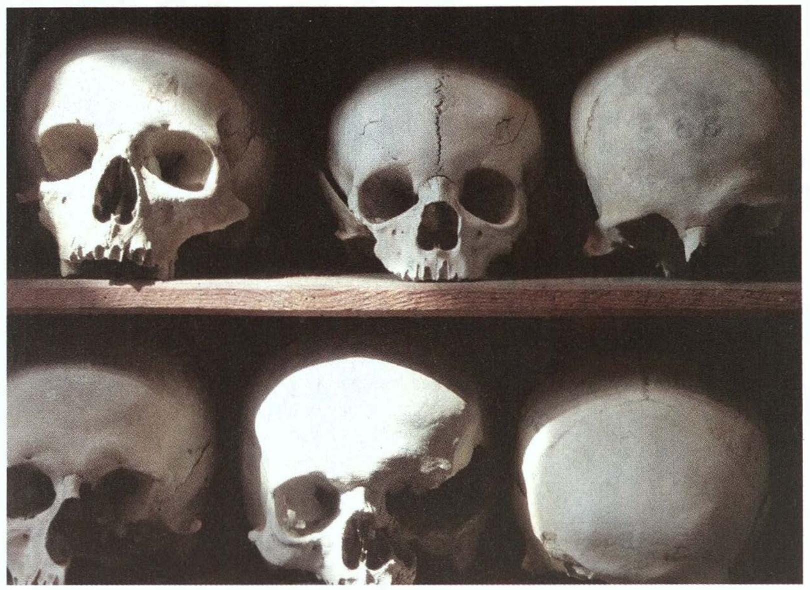
Local writer John Janaway, author of *The Haunted Places of Surrey,* has a theory that the remains are from a nearby churchyard attached to a Saxon church that has been extended over the centuries, leading to the displacement of graves. Consequently, the bones could be anything from Saxon to 14th century and it is hoped that they will be tested to determine their age. A local minister, the Revd Canon Mervyn Roberts of St Peter and St Paul's church near the site, said: "If bones have been found and they are human remains I think it is appropriate that they be given due care and respect." *www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/s/2132018_haunted_house_at_skeletons_car_park_site 8 April 2013.*

Meanwhile, a haunting at the City Museum and Art Gallery in Gloucester has also been linked to human remains buried at the site. According to a report published by the *Gloucester Citizen* (20 April 2013), a ghost dubbed 'George' has long been wandering the museum, which was built in 1900 and holds collections dating back to 1860. Museum curator David Rice was quoted as saying: "I have been here for 13 years and over that time lots of people have come to me and said they had seen him. I have seen something myself and there have been many incidents of doors opening and closing, footsteps and strange noises."

However, despite the long duration of the haunting, not all the staff are accustomed to the presence of 'George'. Although museum assistant Nigel Taylor-James, who has worked at the museum since 1989, insists 'George' is 'a friendly ghost', some fellow employees are said to be too scared to venture into certain parts on the building by themselves. Mr Taylor-James has encountered 'George' on three occasions and describes him wearing a hooded outfit of simple cloth. Rather unusually for an apparition, 'George' seems to respond to being observed. "Each time he looks at you and then makes a hasty exit," said Mr Taylor-James. "He doesn't stay around for long."

Why 'George' is haunting the museum and who he may be are difficult questions to answer; as Mr Rice points out: "The museum is filled with thousands of people's belongings from all around the city and it was once a place where human remains from excavations were kept."

One theory is that the museum stands on a mediæval cemetery attached to the Greyfriars Priory built in 1231; Mr Taylor-James's description is certainly consistent with the appearance of a monk. (In passing, it may be noted that Gloucester also has a Blackfriars Priory dating from 1239, considered the best-preserved Dominican building in England. It too is reputedly haunted). However, another more tenuous suggestion is that 'George' has even older origins, as the City museum is also believed to stand on part of a Roman cemetery. According to the *Gloucester Citizen*, the site was at the edge of the city in Roman times and "a Roman skull has since been found".



DAVID SUTTON

Of course, one wonders why a ghost might wait centuries or even millennia before putting in an appearance in a comparatively recent building. Or is it more than just the presence of human remains that is involved? Interestingly, as at Godalming, demolition and development work is going on in the Brunswick Road area, with building plans for 250 new homes underway; could there be a connection with building and renovation work over the years and recent spooky activity? (See 'Renovation Hauntings' by Peter McCue, **FT268:30–35**, for a polished discussion of this idea). Alternatively, changes in the occupiers of a building also feature in ghost reports. In many accounts of hauntings, odd things are often reported soon after new occupiers arrive; many people have told me of ghosts which made themselves known as soon as they moved into a new property. This is often attributed to misperception of ordinary sounds in what is initially an unfamiliar environment (dubbed 'new house effect' by Maurice Townsend of ASSAP). *www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/George-friendly-ghost-haunting-Gloucester-Museum/story-18754671-detail/story.html#ixzz2W8KzCvyX; Ghosts of Today* (1980) by Andrew Green.

Stories in which a ghost is linked to the presence of human remains have a long pedigree, dating back at least two millennia. Such traditions were present in classical civilisations and may be considered archetypal. The basic plot is provided in the story of the haunted house in ancient Athens that no one would live in because of the sounds of clanking chains from the ghost of an old man with irons on his wrists and ankles. According to Pliny the Younger, the Stoic philosopher Athenodorus (c74 BC–AD 7), came to Athens, rented the house very cheaply because of its sinister reputation, and sat up late at night, working by the light of his lamp. The noises occurred and ghost duly appeared. Athenodorus followed it down a passage into the courtyard, where it vanished. Like a good ghost hunter, Athenodorus duly marked the spot and had it dug up the next day. A man's skeleton in irons was found buried there.

Innumerable variants of this story have been recorded around the world, reported as fact and also appearing in fiction ("...it is arguable that made up ghost stories are just as revealing of social assumptions as so-called authentic accounts" to quote RC Finucane in *Appearances of the Dead,* 1982). Perhaps in recognition of his role in establishing this classic form of ghost story, Athenodorus was even claimed as a spirit guide to the 19th century medium, the Revd Stainton Moses (See *The Controls of Stainton Moses,* 1923, by AW Trethewy.)

Manifestations linked with the restless dead buried under houses are not always as dramatic as spectres with clanking chains; sometimes it is just a feeling or sensation of unease or bad dreams, as with Miss Whiteman at Godalming. In 1889, a Mrs Montague wrote to the Society for Psychical Research about her unnerving weekend visit in June 1872 to the rectory then occupied by her father, who was rector of Passenham in Northamptonshire. Mrs Montague stayed for three days, joining her two children and a nursemaid who had arrived earlier. She was given a room to herself over the dining room, with "the rest of the inmates of the house being quite at the other end of a rather long passage. I hardly slept at all the first (Saturday) night, being possessed with the belief that someone was in my room whom I should shortly see. I heard nothing, and I saw nothing." But more was to follow.

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TO BE CONTINUED

ALAN MURDIE examines hauntings seemingly triggered by the presence of human remains

UNQUIET GRAVES, PART ONE

In July, the unearthing of decapitated skeletons near Gliwicz in Poland was widely cited as another example of a 'vampire grave' from Eastern Europe, coming just over a year since the announcement of the discovery of staked bodies at an excavation at Sozopol, Bulgaria, in June 2012 [**FT291:20**]. In the Polish interment, the skulls had been removed and placed at the feet, whilst in the Bulgarian case iron rods were found driven through the rib-cages. In both cases experts proposed that these were precautions to prevent the dead rising from their graves. Other examples have been found in the Czech Republic, including an entire 'vampire cemetery' at Celakovice near Prague (*Independent, 6 June 2012; D.Telegraph, 11 July 2013*). Concerning the Polish find, it was left to Leo Hickman in the *Guardian* (16 July 2013) to argue that there "could be a less spooky explanation", suggesting that the skeletons were actually those of executed criminals and not vampires.

Mr Hickman added that "the *Guardian* adopts a firmly sceptical position on the undead." Unfortunately, this declaration may not provide the complete reassurance that he hopes. The belief that those denied proper funeral rites might haunt the living unless or until proper rituals are performed is an exceedingly deep-rooted one, found in many cultures throughout history. Indeed, the belief that the presence of human remains at a site can trigger a haunting is still thriving in modern Britain and has featured in two ghost reports this year already.

In March the discovery of what are believed to be human bones under a car park near Godalming railway station in Surrey sparked memories of a haunting experienced by a local family who lived nearby in a house known as Priory Orchard. The bones were unearthed during an archæological survey conducted on behalf of Waverley Borough Council, which is pulling down Priory Orchard as part of affordable housing development. Following the report in the *Surrey Advertiser* of the discovery of "a number of skeletons thought to be human" (one wonders what else they could possibly be!), the paper was contacted by Miss Chelsea Whiteman, 22, who had lived in Priory Orchard with her parents, seven brothers and four sisters. The family occupied the house for six months while their current home was being extended.

Miss Whiteman told the press: "Before we moved [there] we were very sceptical about ghosts, but experiencing all these strange happenings at Priory Orchard has changed all of our minds… The first time I noticed something, I was in the house alone while the rest of my family were out at school and work. I could hear children laughing, talking and moving about upstairs and I knew none of my siblings were at home to make the noises."

Her parents dismissed this at first, but were forced to conclude something strange was going on in the house after a tap in the bathroom was repeatedly turned on, windows were mysteriously opened and a heavy cot in their bedroom was repeatedly moved to the centre of the room. Given the nature of the incidents and the size of the family, one might attribute these events to an outbreak of poltergeist activity in a crowded house – perhaps a rather serious one as Miss Whiteman's three-year-old brother said the ghost had once pushed him downstairs. However, of more significance regarding the discovery of the skeletons is Miss Whiteman's claim to have had recurring dreams of someone buried under the house, "which would really play on my mind the next day". Fortunately, the Whitemans have encountered no problems in their new home.

GETTY IMAGES

MISS WHITEMAN HAD RECURRING DREAMS OF SOMEONE BURIED UNDER THE HOUSE

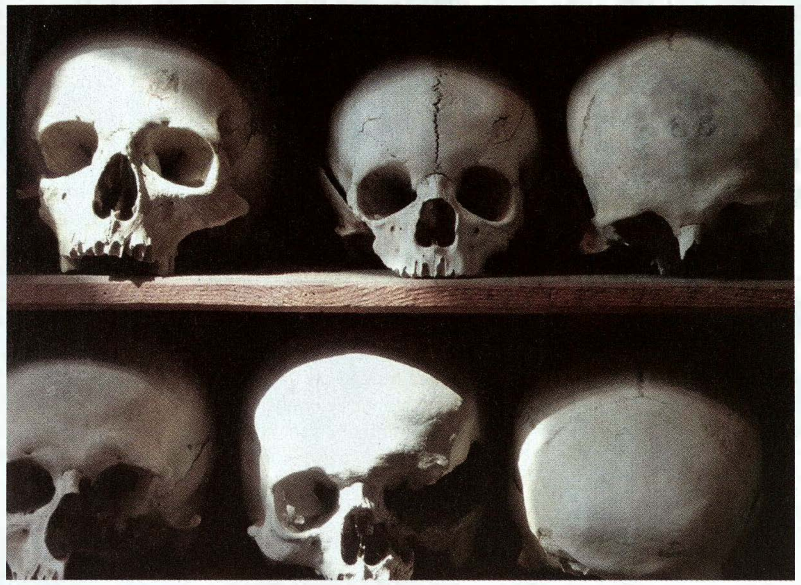
Local writer John Janaway, author of *The Haunted Places of Surrey,* has a theory that the remains are from a nearby churchyard attached to a Saxon church that has been extended over the centuries, leading to the displacement of graves. Consequently, the bones could be anything from Saxon to 14th century and it is hoped that they will be tested to determine their age. A local minister, the Revd Canon Mervyn Roberts of St Peter and St Paul's church near the site, said: "If bones have been found and they are human remains I think it is appropriate that they be given due care and respect." *www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/s/2132018_haunted_house_at_skeletons_car_park_site 8 April 2013*.

Meanwhile, a haunting at the City Museum and Art Gallery in Gloucester has also been linked to human remains buried at the site. According to a report published by the *Gloucester Citizen* (20 April 2013), a ghost dubbed 'George' has long been wandering the museum, which was built in 1900 and holds collections dating back to 1860. Museum curator David Rice was quoted as saying: "I have been here for 13 years and over that time lots of people have come to me and said they had seen him. I have seen something myself and there have been many incidents of doors opening and closing, footsteps and strange noises."

However, despite the long duration of the haunting, not all the staff are accustomed to the presence of 'George'. Although museum assistant Nigel Taylor-James, who has worked at the museum since 1989, insists 'George' is 'a friendly ghost', some fellow employees are said to be too scared to venture into certain parts on the building by themselves. Mr Taylor-James has encountered 'George' on three occasions and describes him wearing a hooded outfit of simple cloth. Rather unusually for an apparition, 'George' seems to respond to being observed. "Each time he looks at you and then makes a hasty exit," said Mr Taylor-James. "He doesn't stay around for long."

Why 'George' is haunting the museum and who he may be are difficult questions to answer; as Mr Rice points out: "The museum is filled with thousands of people's belongings from all around the city and it was once a place where human remains from excavations were kept."

One theory is that the museum stands on a mediæval cemetery attached to the Greyfriars Priory built in 1231; Mr Taylor-James's description is certainly consistent with the appearance of a monk. (In passing, it may be noted that Gloucester also has a Blackfriars Priory dating from 1239, considered the best-preserved Dominican building in England. It too is reputedly haunted). However, another more tenuous suggestion is that 'George' has even older origins, as the City museum is also believed to stand on part of a Roman cemetery. According to the *Gloucester Citizen*, the site was at the edge of the city in Roman times and "a Roman skull has since been found".


DAVID SUTTON

Of course, one wonders why a ghost might wait centuries or even millennia before putting in an appearance in a comparatively recent building. Or is it more than just the presence of human remains that is involved? Interestingly, as at Godalming, demolition and development work is going on in the Brunswick Road area, with building plans for 250 new homes underway; could there be a connection with building and renovation work over the years and recent spooky activity? (See 'Renovation Hauntings' by Peter McCue, **FT268:30–35**, for a polished discussion of this idea). Alternatively, changes in the occupiers of a building also feature in ghost reports. In many accounts of hauntings, odd things are often reported soon after new occupiers arrive; many people have told me of ghosts which made themselves known as soon as they moved into a new property. This is often attributed to misperception of ordinary sounds in what is initially an unfamiliar environment (dubbed 'new house effect' by Maurice Townsend of ASSAP). *www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/George-friendly-ghosthaunting-Gloucester-Museum/story-18754671-detail/story.html#ixzz2W8KzCvyX*; *Ghosts of Today* (1980) by Andrew Green.

Stories in which a ghost is linked to the presence of human remains have a long pedigree, dating back at least two millennia. Such traditions were present in classical civilisations and may be considered archetypal. The basic plot is provided in the story of the haunted house in ancient Athens that no one would live in because of the sounds of clanking chains from the ghost of an old man with irons on his wrists and ankles. According to Pliny the Younger, the Stoic philosopher Athenodorus (c74BC–AD7), came to Athens, rented the house very cheaply because of its sinister reputation, and sat up late at night, working by the light of his lamp. The noises occurred and ghost duly appeared. Athenodorus followed it down a passage into the courtyard, where it vanished. Like a good ghost hunter, Athenodorus duly marked the spot and had it dug up the next day. A man's skeleton in irons was found buried there.

Innumerable variants of this story have been recorded around the world, reported as fact and also appearing in fiction ("…it is arguable that made up ghost stories are just as revealing of social assumptions as so-called authentic accounts" to quote RC Finucane in *Appearances of the Dead,* 1982). Perhaps in recognition of his role in establishing this classic form of ghost story, Athenodorus was even claimed as a spirit guide to the 19th century medium, the Revd Stainton Moses (See *The Controls of Stainton Moses,* 1923, by A W Trethewy.)

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TO BE CONTINUED

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PUZZLING CORPSES

HIGH-ALTITUDE OCTOPUS, INLAND DOLPHIN AND THE MYSTERY OF THE BROOKLYN GATOR'S MISSING BODY

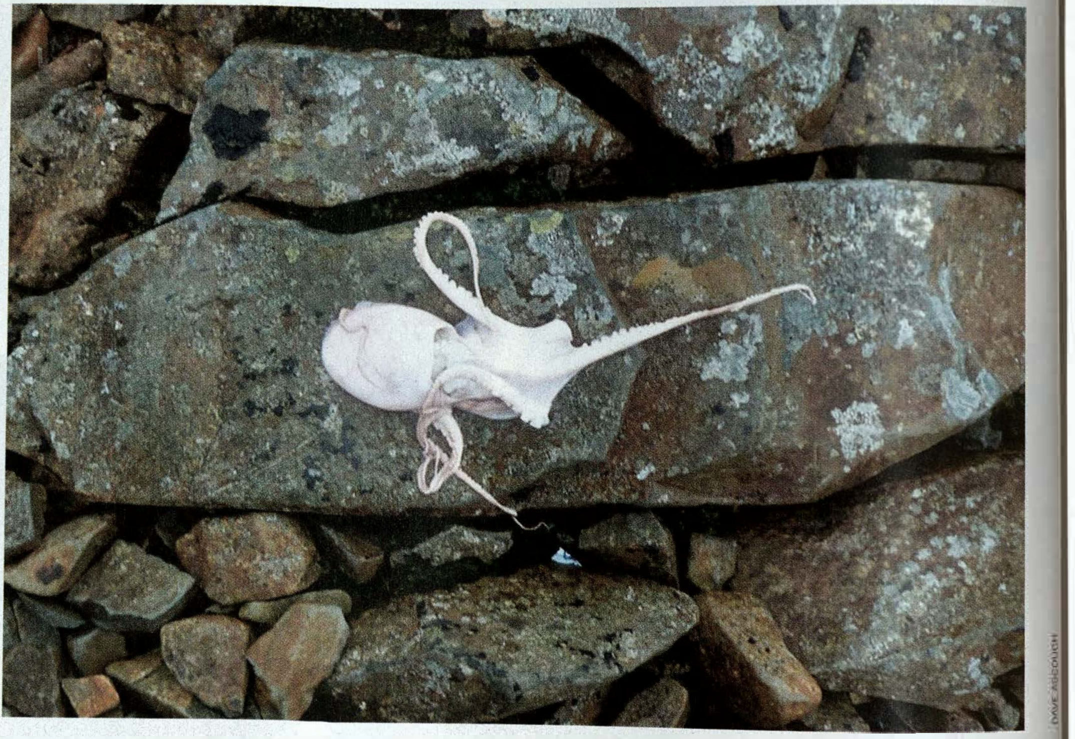
LEGLESS ALLIGATOR

Three dismembered alligator legs were found along North 10th Street in the Williamsburg neighbourhood of Brooklyn in New York around 26 June. One was behind two rocks outside a construction site, another protruded from a street grate and the third was on the seat of an abandoned car. There was no doubt the evisceration was the work of a human rather than the remains of a meal left by a Beast of Brooklyn. The origin of the reptilian remains was a mystery. *(New York) Daily News, 27 June 2013.*

OCTOPUS HIGH AND DRY

At the end of June, litter-pickers on England's highest mountain found a dead octopus, 3,200ft (975m) above sea level. The 8in (20cm) cephalopod mollusc was lying 33ft (10m) from the summit of Scafell Pike in Cumbria. One theory is that a bird dropped it after scooping it up from the Irish Sea. The Lake District is home to ospreys and sea eagles, which have begun colonising the area following a breeding programme in Scotland. However, Dave Ascough, 43, who made the discovery, suspects it was a surrealist prank. "It appeared quite fresh, but I suppose it could have been someone's idea of a joke," he said. "If not that, it raises the question of why the bird would carry it all the way up to the top of the mountain and then lose it and not eat it. But I am not an ornithologist, so it remains a mystery." Scafell Pike is the last leg on the Three Peaks Challenge, in which climbers attempt to conquer Ben Nevis, Snowdon and Scafell Pike within 24 hours. During the summer months, Scafell Pike attracts thousands of such climbers and Mr Ascough told *FT* that the mystery cephalopod had possibly been left atop the peak "by someone trying to raise a few squid for charity."

He and his team carried 10 bin liners full of rubbish down the mountain, including the octopus, on their most recent visit. *BBC News, 2 July; D.Telegraph, 4 July 2013.*

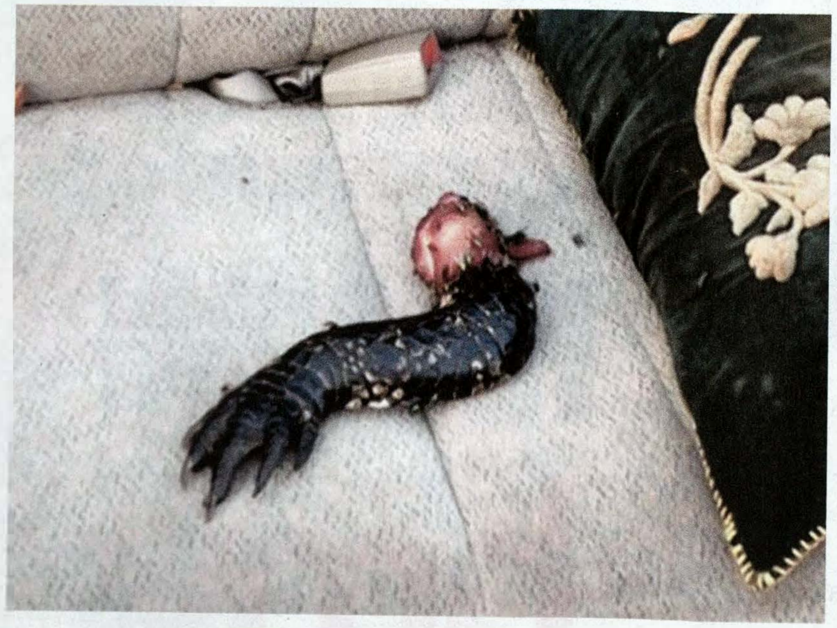


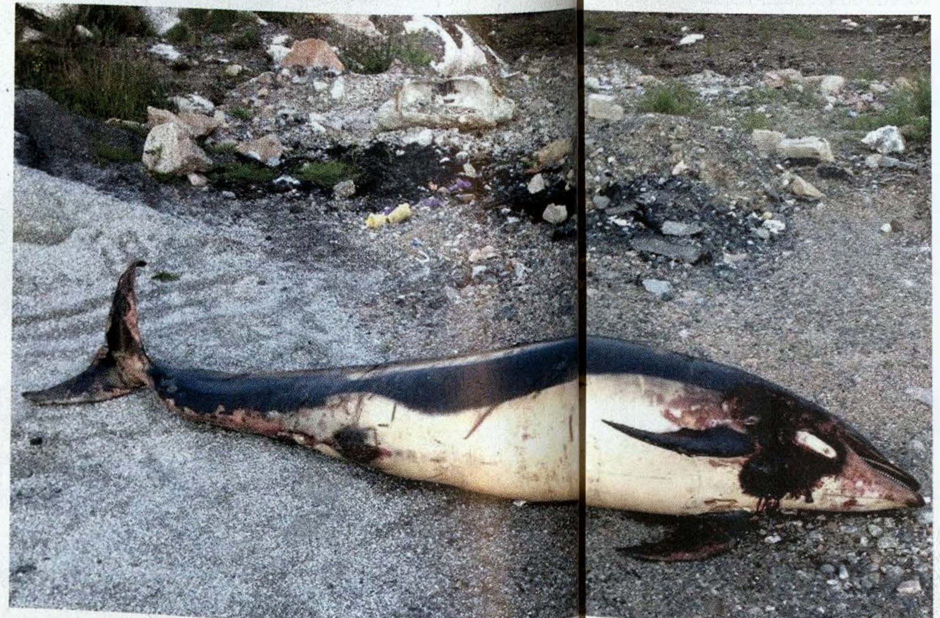
DAVE ASCOUGH

DEAD DOLPHIN MYSTERY

Around the same time, the body of an unusual species of dolphin was discovered on a hillside at Meenbanad, near Burtonport in Co Donegal, Ireland, over a mile inland. The dolphin, which had distinctive black and white markings, had head injuries but the cause of death was not known. Dozens of people visited the scene. The area where it was found is known as the Leifin and there is a council waterworks close by. Local woman Niamh Bonner, who came across the remains, said: "It is not like it is even beside a road and was dumped off a lorry. It had to be dragged there because it is about 100 yards off the road. It's a bit of a mystery as to how it got there."

Padraig Whooley of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group thought it was part of a group of Atlantic white-sided dolphins that beached at nearby Traigheanna Bay on 21 June. He said sightings of such dolphins are rare as they tend to stay further out to sea. "It could have been taken to this remote area so it could decompose naturally leaving a skeleton which could have been put on show," he said. *Irish Times, 29 June; BBC News, 1 July 2013.*

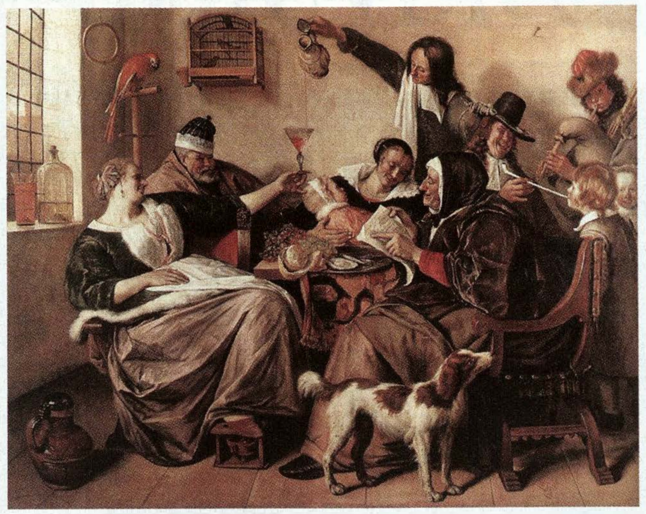


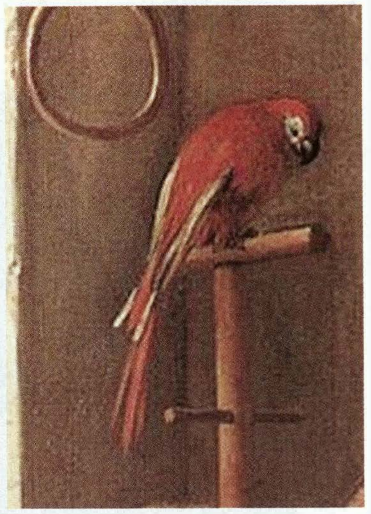


EOIN MCGARVEY

A^Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden





JAN STEEN AND A MYSTERY MACAW

In various *FT* articles, I have drawn attention to classical works of art depicting birds that do not correspond to any present-day species known to science. Brazilian bird artist and crypto-ornithological researcher Rafael Nascimento has recently drawn my attention to yet another example: a large red macaw, depicted sitting on a perch in the corner of an oil painting from about 1665 by Dutch artist Jan Steen, entitled 'The Way You Hear It, Is The Way You Sing It'. Although several living species of macaw are partly red, none is almost exclusively so, like the specimen in this painting. However, it closely resembles another red mystery macaw, which appears in Flemish artist Roelandt Savery's celebrated painting from 1626 of Mauritius's famously extinct flightless icon, the dodo. Both macaws have pale wing plumes but otherwise uniformly red plumage.

Although no living species of macaw corresponds with such birds, they recall a 1650s account by French missionary Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre of a very large, almost entirely red parrot native to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. A century and a half earlier, this still-unidentified but now long vanished parrot had also been observed there by Christopher Columbus's landing party, who claimed that it was as big as a chicken (as indeed are certain species of macaw). Could some specimens of this bird have been brought back to Holland and served as models for Savery and Steen? Or perhaps Steen was directly inspired by Savery? Who can say? That there are two paintings depicting the same variety of mystery red macaw certainly suggests this might be the case. Further examination of such works may well reveal other cryptozoological surprises. *Rafael Nascimento, pers. comm., 6 July 2013.*

BACK IN SIGHT FOR THE NIGHT PARROT

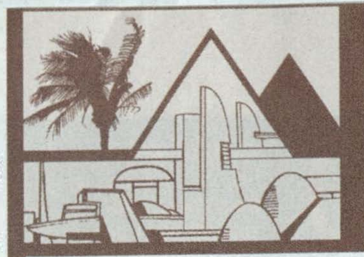
Another mysterious parrot, last reported in 2006, has apparently reappeared. A young specimen was found dead by a wildlife ranger after having decapitated itself when flying into a barbed wire fence in Queensland's Diamantina National Park. The species in question is the notoriously elusive Australian night parrot *Pezoporus occidentalis*, a small, predominantly terrestrial, nocturnal species previously known for decades from only from a handful of sightings.

Queensland-based naturalist John Young now claims to have photographed and filmed one such bird alive and well in western Queensland in May 2013. After submitting some 600 frames and 17 seconds of video footage for examination by a panel of experts at the Queensland Museum on 3 July, he apparently won support for his claim. The evidence had already been seen by a number of other experienced wildlife authorities, all of whom were equally convinced that the bird in question was indeed a night parrot. Moreover, a single Young photo exclusively released by *The Australian* does appear to depict a night parrot in close-up. Young has refused to give the precise location of his encounter, stating that he wishes to keep the site, and bird, safe. *http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/nightparrot-seen-alive-again-after-30-years.htm 29 June 2013; http://sunshinecoastbirds.blogspot.com.au/2013/07/john-young-and-paradise parrot.html 5 July 2013.*

SINGING OUT FOR REDISCOVERY

The New Guinea singing dog, endemic to this large island and named after its distinctive yodelling howl, has been variously classified as a distinct species, a feral domestic dog, or a variety of dingo. Its taxonomic status remains controversial – and its actual survival in the wild even more so. Although they are now widely bred in captivity around the world as companion dogs, there are only two confirmed photographs of wild specimens in their native land. Some zoologists fear that this interesting canid may now be extinct there.

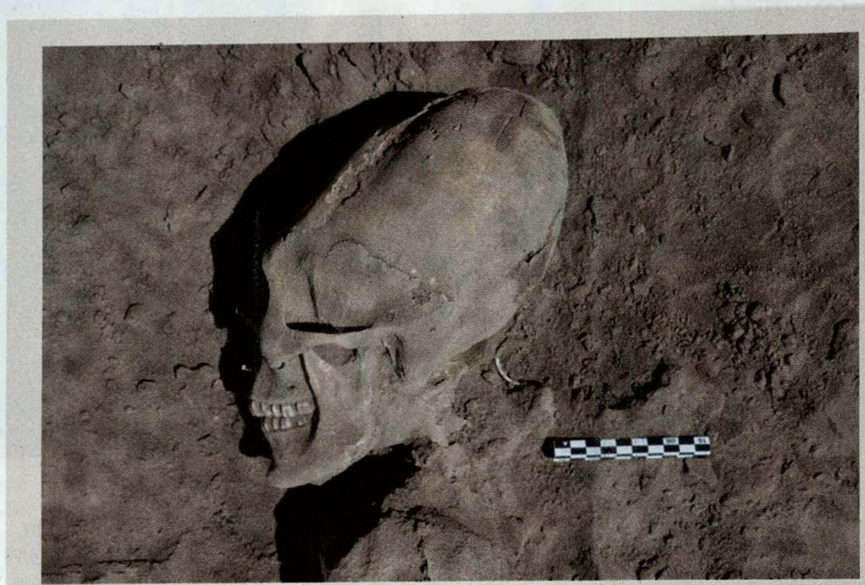
An expedition is to be launched next year to visit New Guinea, seeking traces of any wild population of the singing dog. The team will be headed by field zoologist James McIntyre, Director of the Southwest Pacific Research Foundation. It will be exploring the dense forests of Mount Mandala in the remote Star Mountains region of West Papua, a province in the western Indonesian half of New Guinea. It was here that a lone singing dog was sighted and photographed in August 2012 by Tom Hewitt, Director of Adventure Alternative Borneo. *http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/running-ponies/2013/07/05/expedition-to-find-the-new-guinea-singing-dog-the-rarest-dog-in-the-world/*



MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING heads south of the border to survey some intriguing recent discoveries down Mexico way



INAH

LEFT: One of the deformed skulls found at El Cementerio in northern Mexico. BELOW: Remains of a building at the ancient Maya city of Chactún.

CONEHEADS

The practice of deforming skulls of children as they grew, leading to strange, alien-like shapes, was once common in Central America, and a discovery made in 1999 suggests the tradition spread farther north than previously thought. In that year, residents of the small village of Onavas were building an irrigation canal when they came upon the first pre-Hispanic cemetery to be found in the northern Mexican state of Sonora. The 1,000-year-old site, referred to as El Cementerio, contained the remains of 25 people. Thirteen of them had deformed skulls, elongated and pointy at the back, and five had teeth filed into odd shapes. Cranial deformation involves distorting the normal growth of a child's skull by applying force – for example, by using cloths to bind wooden boards against their heads.

The analysis of the remains was completed in November 2012. Of the 25 burials, 17 were children aged between five months and 16 years; as they had no signs of disease, this could indicate they had died because inept cranial deformation had led to excessive force against the skull. Although cranial deformation and dental mutilation were common among the pre-Hispanic populations of Mesoamerica and western Mexico, scientists had never before seen either practice in Sonora or the American Southwest, which share a common pre-Hispanic culture. A number of skeletons were found with earrings, nose rings, bracelets, pendants and necklaces made from seashells and snails from the Gulf of California. One was buried with a turtle shell on the chest. It's a mystery why some were buried with ornaments while others were not – and also why only one of the 25 skeletons was female.

Over the last 45,000 years, a similar deliberate deformation of skulls was practised in other parts of the world, including North America, Africa and Australia. The Huns did it, and it was taken up by various Germanic tribes that had come under Hunnish rule in fifth century Western Europe. Examples of this technique were last performed on infants in the Congo and the South Pacific islands of Vanuatu well into the 20th century. The custom was said to make a skull shape that was more pleasing and gave the impression of intelligence and high status in some cultures.

Examples of 'coneheads' can also be found in ancient Egyptian art. A picture from the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford shows the heads of the daughters of Akhenaten (ruled 1352-1336 BC) displaying this shape. (Akhenaten was the husband of Nefertiti and father of Tutankhamun – see **FT117:28–31**.) Another daughter of Akhenaten with the same head shape is displayed in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. However, it is thought that these were a graphic convention rather than a deliberate cranial disfigurement or medical affliction. It is true that Egyptologist A Burridge suggested in 1995 that Akhenaten's odd physique (including an elongated skull) was the result of Marfan's Syndrome; but DNA tests on his son Tutankhamun proved in 2010 that the boy pharaoh did not suffer from this condition. *LiveScience.com, 21 Dec 2012; D.Mail, 4+24 June 2013.*

INAH

GOLDEN BALLS

Hundreds of enigmatic metallic spheres have been found buried deep beneath an ancient pyramid in Mexico City. "They look like yellow spheres, but we do not know their meaning. It's an unprecedented discovery," said Jorge Zavala, an archæologist at Mexico's National Anthropology and History Institute. The pyramid is one of the most important buildings in the pre-Hispanic city of Teotihuacan, believed to have been established around 100 BC. It had more than 100,000 inhabitants at its peak, but was abandoned for unknown reasons around AD 700.

The excavation focused on a 330ft (100m) tunnel running under the structure, discovered in 2003 when heavy rain uncovered a hole a few feet from the pyramid. Researchers explored the tunnel with a remote-controlled robot called Tlaloc II-TC, equipped with an infrared camera and a laser scanner. A few months ago, the robot found two side chambers at 236ft (72m) and 242ft (74m) from the entrance, both containing the mysterious spheres. Ranging from 1.5in to 5in (38-127mm), they have a core of clay and are covered with a yellow material called jarosite, formed by the oxidation of pyrite, a metallic ore. The walls and ceiling of both chambers were covered with a mineral powder composed of magnetite, pyrite and hematite, which provided a special brightness to the place. The archæologists believe that priests or even rulers went down to the tunnel to perform rituals. Indeed, they found many offerings, including pottery and wooden masks covered with inlaid rock crystal, jade and quartz – all dating from around AD 100. They now look forward to exploring the last part of the tunnel and three further chambers revealed by the robot cameras. *Discovery News, 29 April; business-standard.com, 2 May 2013.*

MAYA CITY DISCOVERED

An entire Maya city full of pyramids and palatial complexes has been discovered in a remote jungle in southeastern Mexico. Covered in thick vegetation, the ruins were found in Campeche, a province in the western Yucatán peninsula littered with Maya complexes and artefacts. The newfound site, dubbed Chactún, stretches over 54 acres (22ha). It was probably occupied from roughly AD 600 to 900, when the civilisation mysteriously collapsed.

"It is one of the largest sites in the Central Lowlands, comparable with Becan, Nadzcaan and El Palmar in Campeche," said archæologist Ivan Sprajc. Sprajc and his team found three monumental complexes with the remains of pyramids – one 75ft (23m) high – as well as ball courts, plazas, homes, altars, bits of painted stucco and stone slabs known as stele. Epigraphers are still poring over inscriptions, but one stele refers to an apparent ruler named K'inich B'ahlam.

Traces of the lost city were first spotted in aerial images of a vast forested area, previously only explored by loggers and rubber-tappers. "With aerial photographs examined stereoscopically, we found many features that were obviously architectural remains," said Sprajc. *LiveScience.com, 20 June 2013.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

167. WONDERS NEVER CEASE

Second-century AD Rome was awash in forteana. Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights*, bk9 ch4 paras3–4) found a pile of well-thumbed volumes in a Brindisi bookshop. Lucian satirised the genre in his proto-sci-fi novel *True Story* (**FT278:35–7**) and *Lover of Lies*. One character he may have had his eye on was Ptolemy Chennus (= 'Quail' – 'Quack' might have been more appropriate), whose *Strange History* was stigmatised by the Byzantine patriarch/literary critic Photius (*Library*, ch190) as "really useful for those who try to write learned history; it teems with fantastic and crudely-imagined stuff."

Another such contemporary compiler was Phlegon of Tralles, freedman of emperor Hadrian (AD 117–38). Various Byzantine writers preserve extracts of his most serious work, a catalogue of Olympiads from the inaugural 776 BC to AD 137 – what would he have made of London 2012? He also knocked out an inventory of Roman centenarians. Pliny (*Natural History*, bk7 ch48 paras153–64) had done something similar (**FT134:23**). We also have a catalogue of Greek mega-oldies doubtfully ascribed to Lucian, which promises a companion list of Roman wrinklies (either lost or never done).

Phlegon's *On Marvels* was one of many ancient paradoxographical pieces. I here extract some characteristic samples: complete translation by William Hansen (University of Exeter, 1996).

Fellini-esque freak births abound: two and four-headed children, also dog-bonced ones, supplemented by women giving birth to monkeys and snakes – some foreshadowing here of that startling monstrosity in Lindsay Anderson's *O Lucky Man!*

Multiple births are natural concomitants. An Alexandrian woman dropped 20 whelps in four deliveries, most surviving. Another mother there produced five at the same time, plus three more the next year.

A further cognate was the Macedonian who in one week was a child, teenager, adult, pensioner, deceased – ancestor of Solomon Grundy – but not before he found time to marry and have children. In progenitive speed, this fast-mover edges out the women of Pandaia who gave birth at the age of six – should qualify them for a council flat.

Gays have their say also. At Alexandria (What was it about that city? Step forward CP Cavafy and Lawrence Durrell), a male homosexual gave birth, this surprising offspring being duly embalmed and still preserved in Phlegon's time.

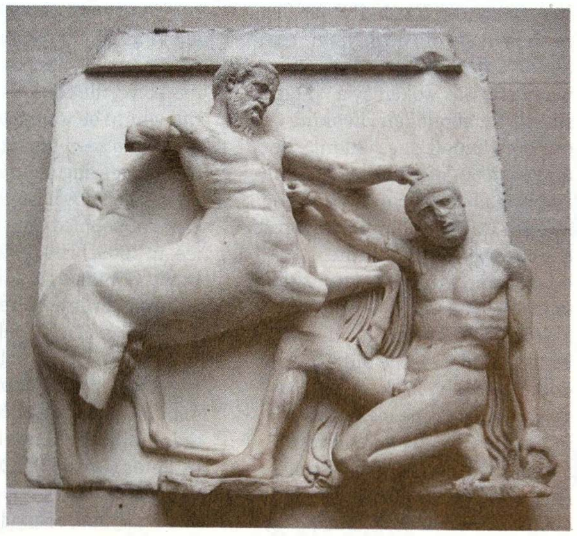
There was a similar event in Germany where a Roman soldier's male slave played mother – anyone know of a similar prodigy in Afghanistan or Iraq?

In the words of Sir Paul MacCartney, Maybe I'm Amazed. Equally so by the sheer number of hippocentaurs found at Saune in Arabia. Phlegon himself saw the one sent to Rome where it was exhibited in the palace, and invites any sceptics to take a look. This one had died from the change of air. Large in size, it had a "fiercer than human face", hirsute limbs and extremities, equine hooves, and ribs attached to front legs and stomach.

Sudden discoveries of unusual bones are one of Phlegon's favourite topics. Apart from the triple human head with two sets of teeth found at Messene, these tend to be giant ossifications. Another moment of tooth was the foot-long or more molar unearthed on Sicily and sent to a much-impressed emperor Tiberius at Rome. Huge bone finds are also reported from the Bosphorus, Carthage, Nitriæ in Egypt, and Athens, where a body as long as its coffin turned up with this inscription: "I, Makroseiris, am buried on a small island, after living a life of five thousand years."

A running theme through Phlegon and other ancient writers from Homer to Augustine was that these finds proved that present-day humans are much inferior to those of ancient times – Darwinians may choose to call this an ancestral theory of evolution or devolution.

In my next column, I'll still be on the bone.



OUT OF THE BLUE

A round-up of potentially lethal things – human waste, lumps of ice, rock and metal – that have fallen out of the sky recently

ADAM GERRARD / NEWSTEAM / SWNS.COM

ABOVE: The block of brown ice, possibly discharged from a plane, that smashed through Caroline Guy's caravan, ripping a mirror off the wall

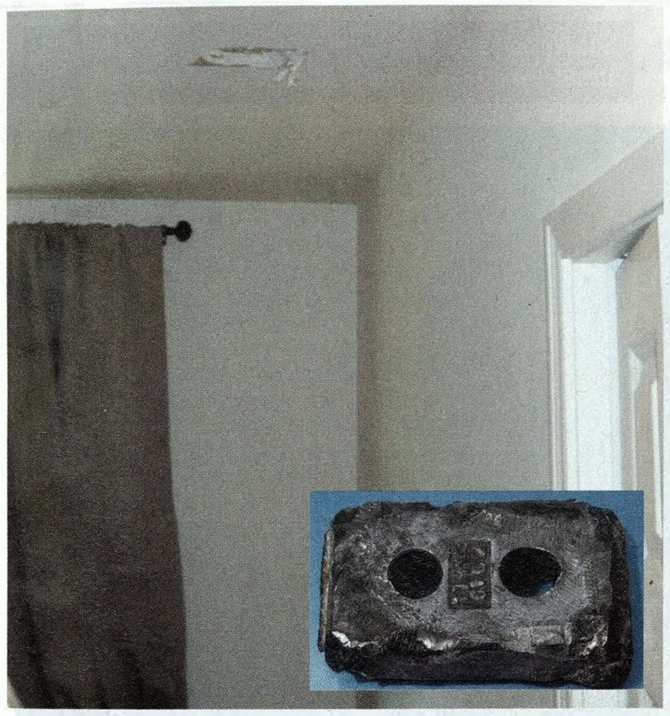
- A block of brown ice 3ft (90cm) wide crashed through the roof of a stationary caravan in South Staffordshire on 2 March. It landed in the bathroom and smashed through the floor before breaking into smaller pieces. Caroline Guy, 52, was in bed at her cottage off Patshull Road in the village of Pattingham, about 30ft (9m) from the caravan, when she was woken by a "huge smash" at about 7am. Looking out the window, she couldn't see anything out of order, so thought no more about it. However, her mother Daphne Jones discovered the caravan damage while doing some gardening later that morning. There was a gaping hole in the roof, with insulation hanging down, while mirrors and doors had been broken. Mrs Guy stored some of the ice fragments in her freezer. She had lived in the caravan for two years until November 2012 while her new barn conversion home was being fitted out, and was planning to clean it before putting it up for sale. She said she could easily have been in the bathroom when the ice landed.

She emailed details of the incident to the Civil Aviation Authority. The CAA had previously estimated there were about 35 similar reported cases per annum. Unless the ice is meteoric, the cause is generally thought to be water leaking from pipes and seeping out of aircraft before freezing. In the past 40 years, the CAA has recorded five cases of people being hit by such ice. In 2009, Bristol pensioner David Gammon, 76, was left painfully bruised when a lump of ice the size of a grapefruit landed in his lap as he sat in his garden. *(Wolverhampton) Express & Star, 4 Mar 2013.* For the phenomenology of ice falls, see "Look Out Below!" by Peter Hassall [FT263:46–49].

- On 23 June, a 3lb (1.3kg) rectangular chunk of lead smashed through the roof of a house in Seattle, Washington, leaving a shoebox-sized hole in the ceiling. No one was injured. The police thought the object had come from an aircraft, but this was denied by the Federal Aviation Authority. So, had it been dropped by a "really big bird", as suggested by a policeman? The only clues were two holes in the lead bar, as if to accommodate bolts, and a partially legible serial number. Several people contacting a local television station thought it was a tooth expelled at speed from a wood chipper, but this was unconfirmed at the time of the report. *usaukonline, 27 June 2013.*

- Children were forced to flee when red-hot fragments of a rock pelted their garden in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, on 25 June. Sarah Marston-Jones, 38, was in her garden with sons Harry, two, and Benjamin, four, when 15 fragments up to 1.5in (38mm) wide landed. The teacher said she heard a 'whooshing' and 'cracking' sound and smelled burning. 'Experts' advised her to check the shards with a magnet as meteorites often contain iron, and she was stunned when it stuck to them. "It could have been quite dangerous and even killed one of our children – that's how close it was," she said.

Dr Caroline Smith, curator of meteorites at The Natural History Museum, suggested the event wasn't heaven-sent, but had a more mundane explanation: a faulty underground electrical cable exploding and catapulting rocks into the air – as occurred in York in 2001, leaving a hole in the ground up to 3ft (90cm) deep. Onlookers at the time thought a smouldering meteorite lay at the bottom of the hole until the real cause was found. Dr Smith was "extremely sure" the Shrewsbury rock fragments were not meteorites. Some appeared to be covered in soil, suggesting they had been buried, she said. "It looks like 'clinker', which is another name for industrial slag, and used for road and paving stone." At the time of the press reports, Dr Smith's hypothesis remained unproven. *D.Telegraph, Metro, Shropshire Star, 27 June 2013.*



ABOVE: The lump of lead that crashed through a Seattle roof after being dropped, suggested a policeman, by "a really big bird"

- At 10.30pm on 19 April, a baseball-sized rock crashed through the roof of 2 Williams Court, Wolcott, Connecticut, and was discovered in the attic the next morning by the house owner, Larry Beck. He said he had heard a sound like a loud gunshot, but assumed a joist or a rafter had broken. The rock, which had broken in half, caused damage to the roof and copper piping, and cracked the kitchen ceiling.

Officials at the Yale Peabody Museum confirmed that it was a meteorite. Stefan Nicolescu, collections manager for the mineralogy division at the museum in New Haven, said: "This is the fifth meteorite that has been recovered after falling to Earth in Connecticut, and the third that has crashed through the roof of someone's house." The first meteorite found in North America fell in Weston in 1807. Two others hit houses in Wethersfield – one in 1971 and one in 1982 – and another fell in 1974 in Stratford, but didn't hit any buildings.

Besides its black "fusion crust", the Wolcott rock had a light grey interior comparable to concrete, a fair amount of metal composition and exterior depressions like thumbprints – all characteristics of meteorites. Many people in Connecticut heard a loud boom and saw a meteor shower during the night of 19 April. *Hartford (CT) Courant, Channel 3 Eyewitness News, 23 April 2013.*

- Emma Gilfillan-Giannakos was playing outside with daughters Sierra, eight, and 20-month-old Lexi when murky liquid fell from the sky, spattering her patio and pool. "I had no idea what it was," she said. "Then I smelled it." It was human waste from an aircraft, and cost £3,000 to clear up. The house was near Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Canada. *Sun, 26 June 2013.*

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

167. YOU'VE CHANGED

The myth

Over a seven-year cycle (or possibly 10), every cell in your body is replaced. You are literally not the same person you used to be.

REPLACEMENT
7
YEARS
HUNT EMERSON

The "truth"

It's unlikely mere science will ever prevail against this strangely popular belief, which has been a Well-Known Fact since (at least) the 19th century. But, just for the record: different types of cell have different lifespans. Some last a few days, some a human lifetime. When you die, some of your cells – in your brain, for instance, and in your eyes – will have been with you since the start. As for the rest, there is nothing especially significant about seven (or, indeed, 10) years as opposed to any other period.

Sources

http://askanaturalist.com/do-we-replace-our-cells-every-7-or-10-years/; www.livescience.com/33179-does-human-body-replace-cells-seven-years.html; http://stemcell.stanford.edu/research/; www.nytimes.com/2005/08/02/science/02cell.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Disclaimer

Interestingly, the website of the Stanford School of Medicine Institute for Stem Cell Biology says: "Every single cell in our skeleton is replaced every 7 years." And recent research suggests that the average age of cells in a middle-aged human might be between seven and 10 years. So, could the choice of the magic number, which we are used to encountering in all manner of mythical stories, actually have some factual basis in this particular case?

Mythchaser

While we're in the charming area of bodily decay, let me seek your help on behalf of a reader who wants to know whether it's true that burying a corpse in quicklime is more likely to preserve it than to destroy it. (She doesn't say why she wants to know; we'll just have to hope for the best). Many sources agree that quicklime's usefulness as a victim-vanisher is mythical, but there doesn't seem to be a consensus. Can you provide a definitive answer – no questions asked?

DON'T MISS MYTHCONCEPTIONS THE BOOK
OUT NOW ONLINE AND IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS

MEDICAL ROUNDUP

Sudden and surprising cures, runny noses from hell and the 66-year-old man who found out he was a woman...

BABY SAVED FROM PIPE

On 25 May, firemen rescued a baby who had become lodged in a sewer pipe after falling down a communal 4th-floor lavatory head-first. Unable to afford an abortion, the 22-year-old mother had given birth in secret; she claimed her child had been lost down the loo accidentally. The two-day-old boy was found in Jinhua, a city in China's Zhejiang province, after residents of a tower block heard crying. Unable to pull the baby free, firemen had to saw off a section of 4in (10cm)-diameter pipe on the 3rd floor and take the infant to hospital still inside. The 6lb (2.7kg) baby, still attached to the placenta, was extracted from the pipe after nearly an hour. He was severely bruised but in a stable condition. He was named Baby 59 after the incubator in which he was put. *D.Telegraph, 29+30+31 May 2013.*

UNEXPECTED CURES

• Liberty Rose Finn was just eight months old when a potentially fatal growth was found on her optic nerve, slowing making her go blind. Chemotherapy halved the brain tumour's size but failed to destroy it; however, much to the astonishment of her doctors, a scan in February 2010, when she was three, showed no sign of the tumour. She had had no drug treatment for 10 months, making the result even more surprising. Her eyesight was already improving. Her mother Dawn, 32, from Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire, said: "We were speechless and couldn't believe it. She is one in a million. Her own body fought it." Roz Osborne of the Samantha Dickson Brain Tumour Trust said: "Tumours never disappear, they just get smaller. It's a mystery." *D.Mirror, Metro, 5 Feb 2010.*

• Mark Dutschak, seven, from Murau in Austria, was left paralysed from the waist down after an operation to remove a cyst that had destroyed most of his spinal cord, leaving it as thin as a piece of cotton thread. However, he made a complete recovery. Local media described the case as a Christmas miracle. "The boy's recovery is really a sensation," said chief neurosurgeon Hans Georg Eder. "The cyst had completely surrounded the spinal cord, which was as thin as a thread inside it. There was virtually nothing left. Yet now he has learned to walk again. It illustrates to a remarkable extent the healing abilities of the very young that greatly surpass that of adults." *North-West Eve. Mail, 18 Dec 2008.*

• At the age of 14, Marlene Barnes was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, a supposedly incurable bowel condition, and had part of her colon removed. "I'd tried everything to stop it but nothing worked," she said. "Then I read of bark's medicinal properties and felt it was worth a go." The 62-year-old mother of two from Cardiff began cutting bark off trees in a park, then dried and ground it up. "I ate hazel bark at first and it felt like a dozen ferrets fighting in my stomach," she said. "I thought I'd die, but I began to feel better than I'd done in ages. I then tried lots of trees to work out which were the real miracle cures. It was trial and error. I nearly poisoned myself so many times, but now I feel wonderful." Ten years later, Mrs Barnes spends almost £1,000 a year on specialist barks from alternative medicine websites and takes 120ml a day. A letter from her consultant gastroenterologist in August 2012 said: "Recent investigations have shown no evidence of active disease." Mrs Barnes aims to sell her own secret bark recipe to a pharmaceutical giant. "Barks are so strong and effective I think they could even cure cancer," she said. *Sun, 1 Nov 2012.*

• Blurred vision was the norm for Australian World War II veteran Robert Chapman, 88, from Mildura in Victoria, until a fall miraculously restored his sight. He was walking his Maltese terrier Flossie in September 2012 when he tripped on his shoelace and fell hard on a concrete path. Suffering from severe bruising on his left side, but no broken bones, he returned home, waking the next day with restored vision and improved hearing. Three months later, he could read without glasses and could see objects clearly. A widower of four years, he had worn long distance, reading and bi-focal glasses for more than half a century, but now all he needs are his sunglasses.

"The next morning when I woke up everything was changed, I could see perfectly and that has continued on to this day," he said. "I think it is miraculous. I'm noticing things I haven't seen or heard for years. It has been a vast improvement." Deciding to be checked out professionally, he booked an appointment with optometrist Stephen Jones two weeks after the incident. "I checked it all out," said Mr Jones, "But I cannot speculate how it has happened." Mr Chapman, who served in New Guinea in 1944 and Borneo in 1945, said he had delayed telling people how the fall had improved his sight as he wanted to be certain it was a permanent change. He said the incident had given him a whole new lease of life. *(Queensland) Courier-Mail; (Sydney) D.Telegraph, 3 Jan 2013.*

• Soozie Tarkenter, 40, an artist from Dunoon, Scotland, was delighted when a cochlear implant allowed her to hear for the first time in her life. "I couldn't believe the difference when they switched the implant on," she said. "It's incredibly strange but brilliant at the same time. But as the implant area is so close to my facial nerves, I lost my sense of taste. It may come back but, if it doesn't, it's a small price to pay for being able to hear. I do miss the taste of things like wine but I can handle spicy curry." *Metro, 30 Sept 2011.*

RUNNY NOSE HORRORS

• An Arizona man thought he had year-round allergies when his nose continued to run. Joe Nagy first noticed it when he sat up to get out of bed. "This clear liquid dribbled out of my nose like tears out of your eyes," he said. It began running "once or twice a week", but "soon it was all the time". After eighteen months he visited a specialist, who determined that his nasal discharge was brain fluid. The membrane surrounding Nagy's brain had a hole in it, causing the brain fluid to leak. The problem was cured by surgery. Dr Peter Nakaji, a neurosurgeon at Barrow Neurological Institute, explained that there was no cutting involved; a needle was inserted through the nose and a bit of glue patched the hole. *MX News (Sydney), Fox News, 7 May 2013.*

• A 24-year-old Afghan man who for years suffered from headaches, a runny nose and deteriorating vision in one eye was given a detailed medical examination using computer tomography at Aachen University Hospital in Germany. Surgeons found he had a 4in (10cm) pencil lodged in his head from his sinus to his pharynx, which had damaged his right eye socket. The pencil (pictured below) was removed and the man was reported to be recovering. He recalled that when he was about nine he had fallen and had a serious nosebleed. The case occurred in 2011, but was presented for the first time at a conference last May. *[AP] 30 May 2013.*

GENDER SURPRISE

• A 66-year-old Vietnam-born Chinese person who had lived his whole life as a man went to a hospital in Hong Kong with a swollen stomach, to be told that the swelling was a cyst on his ovary and he was in fact a woman. Tests showed he had Turner syndrome, a genetic disorder that affects one in 2,500 baby girls, with patients tending to have only one X chromosome (or one and a fragment), instead of the normal two. This causes women to lack some female features, including the ability to get pregnant. Sufferers usually look female, but in this case the patient also had congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), which boosts male hormones and made the patient look like a man; he had a beard and small penis, but no testes.

The combination of the two disorders is extremely rare: only six cases have been reported in the medical literature. This patient was diagnosed later in life than any of the others. He was raised an orphan and had a long history of urinary leakage and arrested growth after puberty at the age of 10. He is just 4ft 6in (1.37m) tall, and has decided to continue perceiving himself as a man, and may receive male hormone treatment. The case was published in the *Hong Kong Medical Journal* on 3 June 2013, and reported the following day in the *South China Morning Post.*

VISCOT
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KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...

GANGSTALKING AND THE SECRET STATE

So now we know: the paranoid Left was right. Since 1977, and the publication of Tony Bunyan's *The History and Practice of the Political Police in Britain*, they have warned of the dangers in the growth of the national security state; and now they have been comprehensibly vindicated. The NSA and GCHQ are hoovering up all electronic communications from baby monitors upwards and trawling most of the Internet. An earlier NSA whistle-blower, Russ Tice, told us that the NSA was also surveilling, tapping and blackmailing politicians – including Obama on his way up the greasy pole – judges, and political opponents. [1]

In the absence of the KGB and the IRA, the Metropolitan Police defined their targets as 'domestic extremists', a suitably broad category which justified them running deep cover agents against everybody from the pro-cycling campaign Reclaim the Streets to animal liberation activists.

Faced with this, two sayings from the 1970s are apposite: "I am paranoid, but am I paranoid enough?" is amusing; but the late Ralph Gleason's first law of American politics after Watergate – no matter how paranoid you are, what they are doing is worse than you could imagine – is the more resonant. This certainly applies to the piece by Robert Guffey in this issue of *FT* about the experiences of Dion Fuller. Miniature drones, antipersonnel electromagnetic radiation and acoustic bullets we knew about. But tiny, sometimes invisible agents? Expanding apartments? Holograms?

This is a high-tech version of *zersetzen*, the technique of 'no touch torture' devised by the East German secret police, the STASI, [2] whose use is spreading throughout the world's secret police forces. About 15 years ago I met an Israeli woman who'd had the misfortune to conduct an affair with a then prominent Israeli politician and was being zersetzened by – she presumed – Mossad. Nothing violent, just constant break-ins at her flat accompanied by rearranging its contents and minor thefts.

It has happened to the late Hilda Murrel's grandson, ex RN Commander Robert Green and his wife, in New Zealand. [3] In Canada and the UK it has been done to Roderick Russell, probably by private sector personnel [4] and to Gareth Llewellyn, a former intelligence analyst, at the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), by members of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS), apparently because they believed him to be a Russian agent. [5] Among the US State Department cables leaked by Wikileaks was one from 2006 in which the then head of CSIS, Jim Judd, was quoted as saying that CSIS was "vigorously harassing" known Hezbollah members in Canada. [6] "Vigorous harassment", including "gangstalking" – described by Robert Guffey in his account of Dion Fuller's experiences – is what Llewellyn and Russell have been experiencing.

And the victims of this state terror can do very little about it. One such, British citizen Malcolm Kennedy, who was framed for murder by Metropolitan Police personnel, and has had his telephones interfered with by persons unknown since he came out of prison, took a complaint all the way to the European Court of Human Rights and achieved nothing. [7] And since our politicians are afraid of the secret state, nothing will change.

NOTES

[1] www.boilingfrogspost.com/2013/06/19/podcast-show-112-nsa-whistleblower-goes-on-record-reveals-newinformation-names- culprits/

[2] See http://zersetzen.wikispaces.com/

[3] I reviewed Robert Green's memoir when it was published in New Zealand at http://lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster62/lob62-murrell-murder.pdf. The UK publication recently was accompanied by an article in the *Daily Mail* at www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article- 2371611/

[4] See the PDF download 'Zersetsen Paper' at http://zersetzen.wikispaces.com/

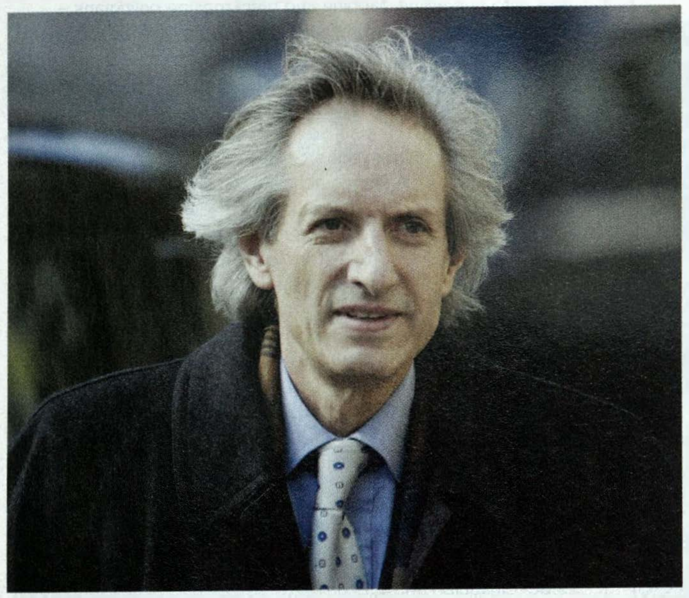
[5] See www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster61/lobster61.pdf

[6] See 'CSIS ex-chief slams courts, Canadians: WikiLeaks' at http://forums.army.ca/forums/index.php?topic=97745.25

[7] See www.red-starresearch.org.uk/

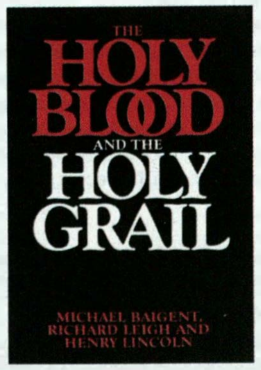
NECROLOG

We say farewell to the bestselling alternative historian bankrupted by an ill-judged plagiarism case against Dan Brown and to a paradigm-shifting climate research scientist


GETTY IMAGES

MICHAEL BAIGENT

Together with Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, Michael Baigent wrote *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (*HBHG*) (1982), a work of 'alternative' history that has sold more than two million copies. This held that Jesus survived the crucifixion, married Mary Magdalene, escaped to southern France and fathered at least one child, starting a royal dynasty that begat the Merovingian kings and is protected to this day by a secret society, the Prieuré de Sion. The germ of the idea had been sown in the 1970s when Lincoln had produced three films for BBC *Chronicle* on the mystery of Rennes-le-Château, including *The Priest, the Painter and the Devil* (1974). The documentary told the tale of Berenger Saunière, a rural priest in a little French village, who becomes fabulously wealthy from (allegedly) unknown sources.



In *The Messianic Legacy* (1986), Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln claimed that the then Grand Master of the Prieuré de Sion, Pierre Plantard de Saint Clair (1920–2000) [obit **FT187:23**], was seeking to restore the Merovingian dynasty and assume some sort of monarchical role in the EU. In fact, the Prieuré was a Surrealist *jeu d'ésprit*, developed by Plantard and others between 1956 and 1967, and subsequently used as a front by shadowy right-wing Masonic groupings [see **FT212:32–39**].

Baigent and Leigh also co-authored *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception* (1991), which posited that the scrolls had been written by a group close to Jesus, rather than by a minor sect, and suggested that the scrolls had been concealed by the Catholic Church. In *The Temple and the Lodge* (1989), they examined freemasonry's role in the creation of modern Europe, while *Secret Germany: Claus Von Stauffenberg and the true story of Operation Valkyrie* (1994) was a highly imaginative recreation of the plot to kill Hitler. In *The Elixir and the Stone* (1997), they traced hermeticism through to the development of modern philosophy. In their last collaboration, *The Inquisition* (1999), they reprised the theme of the Catholic Church and its alleged repression of heretical beliefs. This book was roundly slammed by the critics as slipshod and historically inaccurate.

In his atrociously written pot-boiler *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), Dan Brown made use of certain elements of *HBHG*, beginning the book with the untrue statement: "FACT: The Priory of Sion – a European secret society founded in 1099 – is a real organisation." Brown goes on to give a lightly coded recognition to the *HBHG* authors by naming one of his characters Sir Leigh Teabing, his surname an anagram of Baigent. However, Baigent and Leigh believed that Brown had plagiarised *HBHG* and in 2006 took legal action against Random House, the book's publishers (and theirs as well, ironically). They sought formal acknowledgement that they had originated the Mary Magdalene theory and should be credited for it. (Henry Lincoln wisely chose not to get involved in the legal action.)

Following a trial, which generated much public interest, Justice Peter Smith concluded that there was "no copyright infringement" [**FT209:4–5, 210:5**]. Random House – which reaped the rewards of hugely increased sales of both books – said that the ruling "ensures that novelists remain free to draw on ideas and historical research". More irony: had Baigent and Leigh declared that *HBHG* was fiction, they might have stood a better chance of winning their case. In the event, they were ordered to pay legal costs of £1.3 million. These costs, and the fees for the subsequent appeal, left them penniless. Leigh died the following year [obit, **FT233:28**]. Within six months, according to Baigent's younger daughter Tansy, her father "had to have a liver transplant because he was so unwell from the trauma." He also had to sell his house and move into rented accommodation.

Baigent was born in New Zealand and initially trained in psychology and teaching. He became a professional photographer in 1973 and in 1976, during research for a project on the Knights Templar, he came to England, which is where he met Leigh and Lincoln. Baigent was a Freemason and a Grand Officer of the United Grand Lodge of England. From 1991 to 2011 he was the editor of the magazine *Freemasonry Today*.

Michael Baigent, writer, born Nelson, New Zealand 27 Feb 1948; died (from a brain hæmorrhage) Worthing, West Sussex 17 June 2013, aged 65.

JOE FARMAN

In 1982 Farman, a research scientist with the British Antarctic Survey, discovered a hole in the ozone layer – described as one of the most important scientific finds of the 20th century. The Earth's protective layer of ozone shields terrestrial life from the damaging effects of ultraviolet solar rays, and Farman's discovery of its rapid depletion by man-made chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) led to fear of a drastic increase in skin cancers and cataracts, with a long-term risk of damage to the genetic material of all living things. The threat was so serious that it forced politicians to act.

Farman had been section head of atmospheric dynamics at the British Antarctic Survey's Halley research station on the Brunt Ice Shelf since 1957. In the early 1980s, when the Americans were using state-of-the-art satellite technology to measure changes in the atmosphere, Farman was still relying for his data on weather balloons and the Dobson meter, a rudimentary ozone-measuring machine that worked well only when swathed in a duvet. In October 1982, the Dobson meter showed sharp dips in ozone levels. A year later, as he recalled, "it just went haywire; the levels really fell away." Almost half the ozone layer seemed to have vanished. It seemed incredible, since a NASA satellite taking 140,000 ozone readings a day had reported nothing out of the ordinary. Thinking that his antiquated contraption might finally have gone on the blink, Farman replaced it with a new one, but by October 1984 this was showing an even deeper hole.

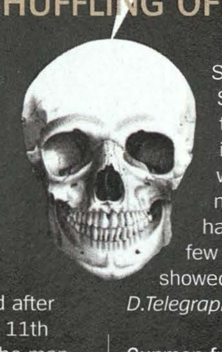
When Farman published his findings (with Jonathan Shanklin and Brian Gardiner) in *Nature* in May 1985, they were greeted with widespread scepticism – until a research plane flew through the ozone 'hole' and detected the chemical reactions predicted were taking place on the surface of frozen particles in stratospheric clouds over the South Pole. At the same time, NASA was provoked to review its records – only to find that its satellite had indeed made similar measurements to Farman's, but that its software had been set to dismiss unusual data as unreliable, and had substituted 'fill values' that it thought more likely. This is an outstanding example of orthodoxy stifling damned data, and would have delighted Charles Fort. Even more embarrassingly, it subsequently emerged that NASA had its own Dobson meter at the South Pole, which had also been registering low ozone levels but, in what was described as a "clerical error", the data had been misread. This is now regarded as one of the greatest scientific oversights of all time.

In 1987, 24 countries signed the Montreal Protocol to phase out CFCs and other ozone-damaging chemicals; since then, the agreement has been ratified by all 197 UN countries. Research published in 2006 suggested that the dangerously thin ozone layer over Antarctica would heal within 70 years.

Joe Farman, scientist, born Norwich 7 Aug 1930; died 11 May 2013, aged 82.

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



A man in his 70s died after breaking his leg while going thorough a set of revolving doors at South Tyneside district hospital in South Shields. The doors have subsequently been switched to automatic slide – but patients now complain of draughts. *Sunday Mirror, 24 Mar 2013.*

A five-year-old South Korean girl was killed after being struck by a man as he fell from his 11th floor apartment in an apparent suicide. The man, a Mr Jang aged 39, jumped from the flat in the southern port of Busan and hit the daughter of his neighbour, who was emerging from the building. He died immediately. The girl, who was with her father, was taken to hospital but was pronounced dead soon after arrival from brain damage and broken bones. South Korea has the developed world's highest suicide rate. *D.Telegraph, 24 May; D.Mail, Irish Independent, 25 May 2013.*

William Lintern of Sheldon, Birmingham, who had twice recovered from cancer, died on his 85th birthday from a chest infection after doctors at Solihull Hospital misdiagnosed a pea in his lung as a cancerous tumour. They concluded that the supposed tumour "must be aggressive and there would be little treatment offered". *D.Telegraph, 23 April 2013.*

Stuart Duncan, 54, a council IT worker from Darlington, County Durham, was walking home from the railway station with a friend when he broke his leg trying to jump over a puddle. He packed his injured limb in ice, and two days later went to hospital, where he was X-rayed and given a cast. However, he developed a blood clot that killed him on 10 January, 18 days after the leap. *D.Mirror, Sun, 18 May 2013.*

A German man died of a heart attack after being bitten by a viper during a show designed to help people conquer a fear of snakes. Dieter Zorn, 53, died minutes after being attacked by an aspic viper during his show in Faugères, southern France, on 18 June. He was bitten several times, but was able to recapture the snake before it attacked anyone in the audience. Emergency services were unable to save the showman with a blood-thinner. *Metro, 21 June; Independent on Sunday, 23 June 2013.*

Sandra Eacott, 59, suffered from agoraphobia but her condition was improving and health workers and family encouraged her to venture out more. On 22 January, she drowned after slipping on an icy path and falling into the River Stort at Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, next to Sheering Mill Lock. Cold weather had turned the riverbank into a sheet of ice and she lost her footing, despite wearing rubber grips on her shoes. She may also have been slightly drowsy, having apparently taken her medication a few hours early. A post mortem examination showed she died from "dry drowning". *D.Telegraph, 28 June 2013.*

Gunmen from a shadowy cult ambushed a group of police officers in central Nigeria, killing 30 of them and then setting fire to their bodies, according to an official statement on 9 May. The Ombatse pagan movement, which says it is committed to purging social vices, has existed in Nasarawa state for years, but has grown increasingly aggressive in recent months. *(Queensland) Courier-Mail, 11–12 May 2013.*

Christina Hale, 57, a mother of four from Bridgwater, Somerset, died after picking and eating one of the world's most deadly mushrooms from her garden to bolster the flavour of Campbell's Cream of Mushroom soup for supper last November. She failed to realise that the fungi growing in her garden beneath some mature oak and fir trees were death caps (*Amanita phalloides*). Just half a cap can be fatal. (Victims are alleged to include the Roman Emperor Claudius and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI.) Ms Hale ate a large amount of soup while her husband, Jocelyn Lynch, 49, had less as he followed it up with some stew that his wife didn't fancy. The couple began to feel ill the following morning and were admitted to hospital in Taunton two days later. Mrs Hale suffered multiple organ failure and died the next day (19 November). Her husband made a full recovery. Recording a verdict of misadventure, the West Somerset Coroner said: "The problem with this mushroom is that if you do taste it, it does not taste unpleasant." *D.Mail, <i> 10 May 2013.*

A 35-year-old man was found dead after apparently trying to have sex with a hornets' nest on his farm in Ystad, Sweden, with 146 stings. Apocryphal? *D.Star, 16 May 2013.*

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FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

C'MON BABY, LIGHT MY FIRE

Chinese lanterns have been in the news repeatedly during the past 10 years for being misidentified as UFOs. Any single brightly lit, flickering light in the sky (or a group of them – they are often tethered together by hoaxers for maximum effect) is almost certain to be some form of paper lantern with a flame attached to its underside, and since 2003, when lanterns appeared at the Glastonbury festival, this type of UFO has been reported almost to the exclusion of all others in the UK and Europe. They can be breathtakingly beautiful, whether appreciated just as art in the sky or interpreted as UFOs. But they can also be dangerous. Animals have died after swallowing their remains and at the end of June this year one was caught on CCTV, landing on a recycling plant in Smethwick, near Birmingham (shown.at right). The blaze that followed caused 100,000 tonnes of plastic to go up in flames, creating a 6,000ft (1,830m) smoke plume and £6 million pounds in damage. Now, the heyday of Chinese lanterns may well be over, as police, fire chiefs, MPs and even some otherwise sensible ufologists have called for them to be banned in the wake of the latest conflagration. Flying Saucery casts a sceptical eye on those who would ban anything just because it can cause an accident. It's the thin end of a very sharp wedge, but as the outcry continues it may result in a drop in sales and a reduction in this type of sighting. We'll see. *BBC News, 1 July; Guardian, 2 July 2013.*

PAUL ELLIS / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

SORRY ALIENS, IT'S JUST TABLOID SORCERY!

The soaraway *Sun's* devotion to silly season UFO stories resulted in a bizarre apology to the Church of Scientology in June. The tabloid said it was sorry "to any alien lifeforms" for suggesting that "two flat silver discs" spotted at East Grinstead, Surrey, were hovering above the Church's HQ. The original 'exclusive' was concocted from a genuine UFO report made by the crews of two passenger jets to the Civil Aviation Authority on 30 December last year. But without checking the staid primary source, readers would not have realised the facts were considerably less exciting than the spin generated by the tabloid. The UK Airprox report on which the story was based explains how two independent aircrews saw two "untraced objects" as they approached Gatwick airport. The first sighting was made by the pilot of a B777 who described seeing "two white or silver discs at 1,000–1,500ft [300–450m] which appeared to be very slow-moving or stationary." A following B767 told how a couple of man-made objects like "some sort of toy" passed underneath the aircraft as it approached the runway just before 9am. A third aircraft was advised to continue its approach, but it is not clear if the crew saw anything unusual. But air traffic controllers did see "unknown targets" on their radars that coincided with the two visual reports; these quickly disappeared. The investigators failed to reach a conclusion but suggested the most likely cause was toy balloons, kites or even small model aircraft. This seems a reasonable explanation given the crews' description of something "man-made and toylike". The report noted "there are saucer-shaped or blimp-shaped model aircraft, up to 4ft [1.2m] in diameter on sale to the public" and that there are many open fields on the Gatwick approach run from which they could be launched. So how did the link with the Scientologists come about? Well, one line in the CAA report refers to a radar return appearing "on the outskirts of East Grinstead". Any sorcery involved in this UFO story was purely the product of the tabloid's imagination. *UK Airprox Report no 2012175, 24 April; Sun, 8 & 13 June 2013.*

SOLWAY SPACEMAN SOLVED?

On 23 May 1963, Cumbrian fireman Jim Templeton took his wife and daughter for a picnic on the shores of the Solway Firth which separates part of Scotland from England. It was a bright spring day and he took several photographs. After the film was developed, Jim was surprised to find an anomalous figure on just one of the snaps, apparently floating in mid-air behind his daughter's shoulder (see **FT196:29, 286:28–9**). The *Cumberland News* published the image, dubbed the 'Solway Spaceman', and Templeton achieved notoriety, with his photo appearing in numerous books, magazines and TV documentaries to the present day. Jim died in 2011, but the mystery of his photo has survived him. Numerous explanations have been put forward over the years from hoaxing (Templeton was well known as a practical joker) to an alien astronaut. Kodak's laboratories tested the negative and claimed the image was of a solid object external to the camera. Although nothing was seen in the sky, tales of Men In Black visitations led the Solway Spaceman to become part of UFO-lore. Templeton always claimed that he could see no one else in the viewfinder of his camera when he took the photograph, emphasising the anomalous nature of the image. But a new theory suggests this was because the camera he used, a Pentacon F SLR, only revealed 70 per cent of what the lens was capturing. This being the case, he failed to notice his wife walking briefly into shot, and making her mark in history. This is a vaguely plausible, scientific, theory. Another photo from the same day shows Jim's wife wearing a blue dress which has overexposed to white, the colour of the 'spaceman'. Fiddle with the image in a programme such as Photoshop and suddenly the 'spaceman' looks alarmingly like a woman wearing a dress, walking away from the little girl. Can the answer to this puzzle be so simple? Have a look at these links and decide for yourself: *http://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Solway_Firth_Spaceman; http://i.imgur.com/Py7ZI9i.jpg*

UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES MEETS THE MAN WHO SAW A SILVER ALIEN THAT WALKS THROUGH FENCES

MAN ON THE MOSS

In a recent column (**FT302:31**) discussing sightings in which electrical energy has created problems with wristwatches, I briefly noted that an encounter on Risley Moss, Cheshire, was a good example of this phenomenon. The witness "saw a glowing white mass cross the road in front of his vehicle as he returned home late one night... in March 1978. His radio receiver 'exploded' as if absorbing a discharge, his fingers on the steering wheel exposed to the light were left with the familiar sunburn effect for days. And his watch stopped at the moment of encounter."

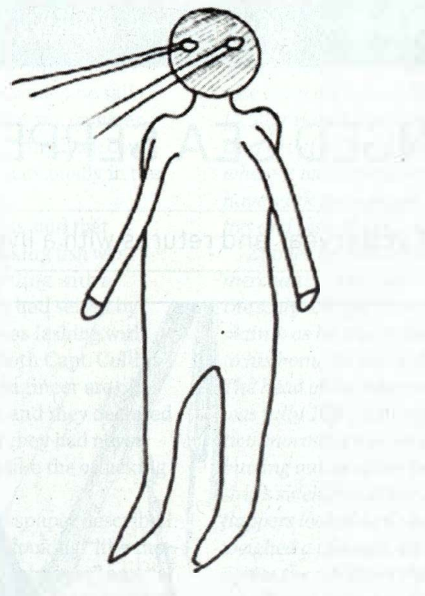
Reader Andy Pearson lives locally and has added a new anecdote suggesting another interpretation of this encounter, which remains one of the strangest that Peter Hough and I ever investigated when we both lived in this part of Cheshire.

Peter and I met the witness, Ken Edwards, soon after his encounter, reconstructing events with him on location. He was a tall, affable man in his late 30s, working as a service engineer, married and living in a neat bungalow in the village of Risley, known for its infamous remand centre.

On the evening of 17 March 1978, Ken had driven his van to a union meeting in Sale, south Manchester. He travelled home via the M62 motorway, built a decade earlier to bisect the springy peat bogs of Chat Moss and the wildlife haven of Risley Moss. Like other locals, Ken used an unmarked service road off the motorway to cut through land overgrown and unchanged since World War II, when this was a vast ordnance factory. It was in this deserted spot that his experience took place. I knew the location well. In the two years prior to Ken's sighting I had studied Media Communications at Padgate College, beside the Moss, previously a military training camp. Soon after, I moved into one of the first bungalows built on the old ordnance land when a new community called Birchwood transformed the derelict site.

But as Ken drove home to Risley that night, the area between Padgate and the nature reserve was home to little but an Atomic Energy Research site beside service road Daten Avenue (from Department of ATomic ENergy). This designed reactors, plotted radiation flows after Chernobyl and housed other mysteries, if locals are to be believed (allegedly including a 1950s radiation leak that caused one building to be sealed indefinitely).

Ken reached Daten Avenue at 11.45pm, approaching with the fence bordering the atomic facility on his left. Here he caught sight of something on the steep, thicket-covered embankment to his right. To Peter Hough, meeting the witness a few days later, Ken described a being of some sort – and, indeed, his first words to his wife Barbara on arriving home, were: "I've seen a silver man". To me, a week later, Ken was a little more vague, referring to a silvery-white shape that emerged from the bushes and moved in an unusual way, with 'arms' emerging upward, a black, bowl-shaped head and a gait that seemed totally unnatural. While Ken Edwards's drawing (shown above) undeniably shows a figure, when I went to the location with him and tried to reproduce the motion of this being – face forward, arms outstretched – it was impossible to move down the slope in that way, because the terrain made you balance sharply backwards. I suspect the figure was something more amorphous – a mist that had a vaguely humanoid shape and was interpreted as something more familiar by the percipient – though Ken disagreed.



Ken's first words to his wife were "I've seen a silver man"

So what was the origin of the 'man' in a silvery suit (possibly reflecting the van headlights)? Peter and I looked for, but found no evidence of, a student prank from Padgate College. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* had just received a Royal premiere and massive press attention, and the media suggested that Ken had seen a 'spaceman' – though he never put forward that interpretation. The *News of the World*, in its inimitable style, later announced that Ken had witnessed a "flasher from outer space"!

The local *Warrington Guardian* did carry a brief report of a sighting by four youths of a cigar-shaped object hovering over the Atomic Energy building at Risley. This was published just hours before Ken's encounter, though he only read it later. We realised that this report *could* have inspired someone to hoax Ken at the same spot, but we found nothing to support this. Other strange lights have been reported above Risley Moss nature reserve since 1978, and security staff at the new Birchwood Mall recorded others on a remote camera.

Ken's story reached the media via Padgate police. Wife Barbara drove him there after his return home, seeing his state of shock. The police told us they were persuaded of his sincerity because he was visibly shaken, even three hours after the incident. They then called the security guards at the Atomic Energy building and drove Ken back there around 3am. Met by a search party of some two-dozen men armed with batons, they looked for the intruder. These hardened patrol officers were so convinced by Ken's account that most wouldn't venture into the thicket until daybreak.

Peter Hough and I are writing an in-depth account of this complex investigation, but briefly the 'figure' was seen to cross Daten Avenue in front of a petrified Ken, emitted 'laser like' beams from its head that struck his hand as it gripped the steering wheel, then walked straight through a 10ft (3m) high security fence into the atomic energy facility. The search party and police confirmed there were no breaks in the metal to make this possible.

Ken actually didn't reach his home at Risley until 12.30am – meaning that significant time is unaccounted for after 11.45 (he suggested that he must have sat in his van, terrified, for those 45 minutes). Apart from the effects on his watch, Ken's fingers were mildly burned and his van radio transceiver had 'exploded' after a power overload.

Sadly, Ken himself became ill within a few months of the encounter and was diagnosed with cancer in both his kidneys and throat. Treatment failed to save him, and he died aged just 42, still no wiser as to what he had encountered.

Our years of research have taken many forms – from considering a suited firemen working at a nearby experimental reactor site to an 'isolation unit' atop the mound beside Ken's van that night. This was used to conduct tests into sensory deprivation, with people locked inside for lengthy spells.

Andy Pearson's new information came from a neighbour who had organised the civilian security for a time after the Atomic Energy complex closed down their manufacturing and research plant.

"Staff became concerned during night patrols," he informs us, "as they would, on occasion, see a figure dressed in what was described as a ski-suit... a figure which always evaded them." They doubled up duty at night, but when the figure reappeared, it always escaped again.

Andy has an intriguing suggestion as to what the mysterious figure might have been. A Naval storage site was located on land nearby, and he speculates that 'special forces' might have trained here, using the night patrols as an exercise in 'evading capture'. Even if this theory proves correct, it is hard to see how it fully accounts for some of the riddles surrounding the 'Man on the Moss'.

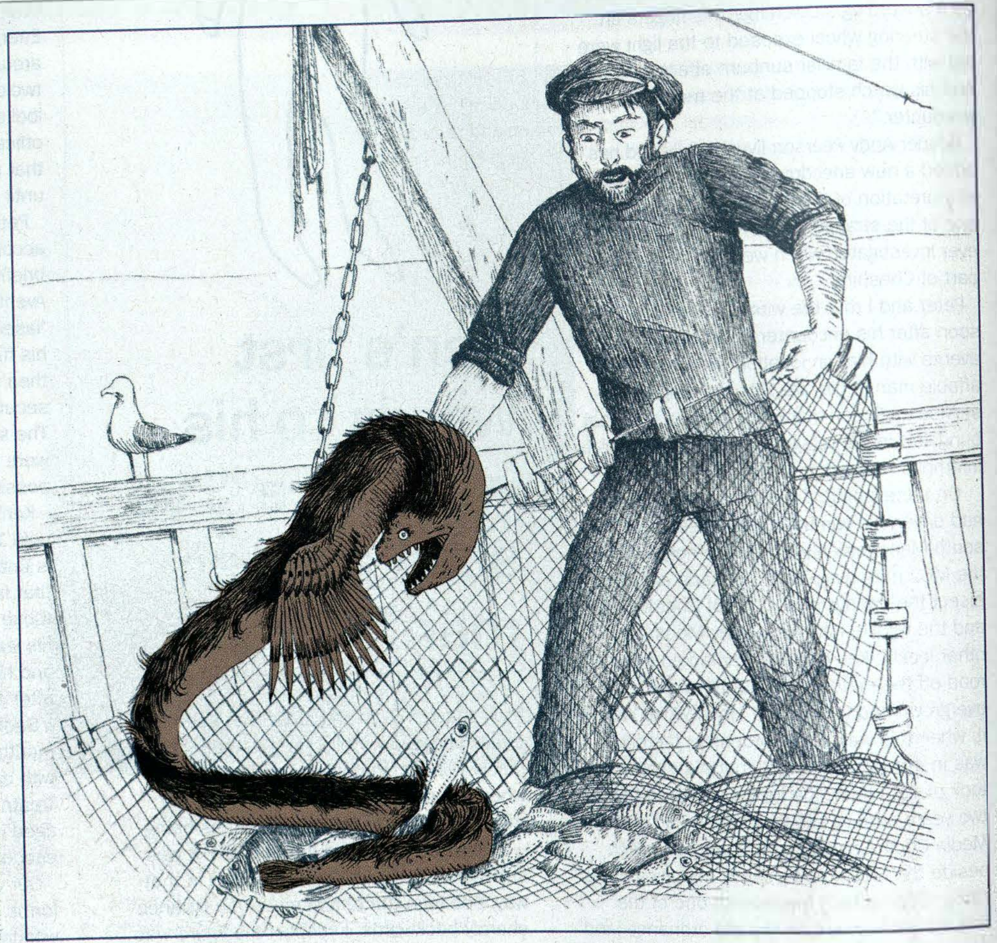
AFP / GETTY IMAGES

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

46 CUE THE WINGED SEA SERPENTS

THEO PAIJMANS sails the seas of yesteryear and returns with a lively catch of strange sailors' stories


CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

What is arguably the first report of a winged sea serpent appeared in American newspapers between June and August 1881: "Captain Larsen, of the bark *Honor*... reports that while about half-way between Madeira and St Vegas, Canary Islands, he passed one of the most remarkable fish that he ever saw. This marine monster is described as being about 40ft [12m] in length, with four large fins, or wings, arranged in a row down its back. These fins varied in length, according to the reckoning of Captain Larsen, from 18 to 22ft [5.5 to 6.7m], and in width from six to nine feet [1.8 to 2.7m]. At the time of its being sighted the fish was about a quarter of a mile to windward of the vessel, and was lashing the water with its tail and wings, evidently in combat with some other monster." [1]

There is another hint in a short notice from 1892: "A skipper claims to have seen the sea serpent in the sky. If the phenomenal monster has really been translated many an ancient mariner will experience a discouraging loss of material for new yarns." [2]

An account of a capture of a strange marine animal published in 1896 hints at a possible tradition among sailors involving winged sea serpents: "Capt. George Belcher, while fishing near New Haven, Conn., the other day caught a remarkable sea monster. The animal is 4ft 1in [124cm] long, 3ft 6in [107cm] wide, and 4 inches [10cm] thick. It is of a dark gray colour, covered with hair, and has two wings. An old salt who saw it said: 'Why that fish is nothing but a small sea serpent. It's got wings but hasn't fully developed yet.'" [3]

In 1901, when the coasting schooner *James Slater* arrived at Morris street wharf in Philadelphia with a cargo of bones and scrap iron from Havana, Edgar Hassann, steward of the ship, told a tale of 'weird experiences', including an encounter with a red sea serpent with wings that followed the schooner for several miles:

> *About a week after leaving Havana and while in the Gulf Stream Steward Hassann and George Peterson, the captain's brother, were startled to see a peculiar fish following the vessel a few yards behind. It was dark red in colour, with its eyes on the side, large ears and had wings nearly a yard long on either side. The steward declares that he never saw or heard of such a monster, and the crew were greatly alarmed at its appearance. Several times it jumped out of the water and flapped its large fins, opening its mouth wide. The monster was no doubt attracted by the stench of the bones, and the crew feared that it would jump on board. When night came the strange animal suddenly disappeared and was not seen again...* [4]

> "Several times it jumped out of the water and flapped its large fins, opening its mouth wide... the crew feared that it would jump on board..."

Alleged sightings of the winged sea serpent are far and few between, and each time with a different description. I found no mention of any winged sea monster until 1911. That year, passengers and the crew of the White Star liner *Celtic* "reported having passed early yesterday morning a formidable looking creature which was going at high speed in pursuit of a school of young whales. The monster, they say, had wings, and rose frequently 10ft [3m] or more from the water. Whales and pursuer faded from sight within a few minutes." [5] The improbable tale prompted one of the many American newspapers that carried the story to comment: "The sea serpent season has arrived and the first reports tell of a winged monster that chases whales. Unless the winged monster is larger than an aviation field it will be in order to ask what it will do with the whales it may succeed in capturing." [6] Another dryly observed: "Even the sea serpents appear to recognise the necessity of keeping right up in the line of progress." [7]

Fun notwithstanding, there was a second ship involved in the sighting:

> *A few days ago a steamer came into New York several of whose passengers reported that they had distinctly observed... a monstrous creature that had wings and generally resembled a partially submerged biplane... Now comes a story from Philadelphia which cannot have been concocted by passengers of two vessels without such expenditure for wireless telegraphy as few makers of fiction would care or dare to incur. While the New York story is vague, but contains a sketch or hint of a creature with biplane attachment, the observers on board steamer Haverford just arrived at Philadelphia describe the monster of the deep as "a hydroplane serpent... some of the passengers are almost graphic in their narration. They say the monster had 'a grey body mottled with black and purple', and was nearly as long as the Haverford... Lloyds Register gives the Haverford's gross tonnage as in excess of 11,000 tons, and her extreme length as 531ft [162m]. Hence if the monster, fish or serpent was nearly as long as the Haverford, the extreme length of said monster came very close to being one tenth of a mile. What was it?* [8]

Five years later, in August 1916, the Wilson Line steamship *Colorado*, on its way from Hull to Boston, was crossing the Grand Banks when "the attention of the chief engineer was attracted to what appeared to be the sails of a small fishing schooner. Suddenly the supposed sails flapped down with great force against the surface of the water. Then they were raised and brought down again. This was repeated several times. The chief engineer called Capt. Collins.

"What appeared to be sails were the fins of a sea monster, whose huge curving back could be made out occasionally in the wash of the sea.

"Capt. Collins said that the strange looking fish was apparently battling with a whale, which it had seized by the back and was lashing with its great fins. Both Capt. Collins and the chief engineer are old seafaring men and they declared yesterday that they had never seen anything like the attacking monster." [9]

Another newspaper described the monster as looking "like the sails of a small schooner" and "a gigantic fish with... far-reaching wings." [10]

In 1922, an even more incredible report emerged:

> *The most thrilling story was brought here last week by officers of the national Greek liner* Constantinople, *who said that motor launches armed with one-pounder, quick-firing guns were searching the sea of Marmora for a winged marine monster which had been sighted circling Dog island at great speed for three or four days.*
>
> *When it rose from the sea and flew over San Stefano toward the city of Stamboul it was reported to have made a booming sound like the German triplanes that flew over Paris during the war...*
>
> *Officers on the* Constantinople *said that the flying sea serpent was first reported off the ancient port of Chalcis in the Aegean sea and so alarmed the sponge divers that an appeal was sent to Athens to send a gunboat to search for the monster and destroy it. When the commander of the fort fired a gun in the direction indicated by the scared sponge divers the serpent rose to an altitude of about 5,000ft [1,500m] and flew away toward the port of Smyrna, Asia Minor, where it was reported next day to have sunk two caiques laden with figs and pistachio nuts.*
>
> *Zubdee Effendi, a Turkish rug merchant... said that he saw the scaly-winged monster quite plainly as he was crossing the bay to his home on one of the islands... The head of the nautical reptile was fully 10ft [3m] across; with two enormous reddish green eyes butting out on either bow like a ship's sidelights, while its immense flappers looked as if they easily weighed a ton each. Its beam across the middle of the back, which rose high out of the water, Zubdee Effendi continued, was 15ft [4.6m] and the length over all was fully 50ft [15m].*
>
> *When the sea serpent turned its head toward the boat the heat on deck became unbearable, said the Turkish rug merchant. He felt that his beard was shrivelling up. Finally the monster dived, flung its huge tail into the air with a swish that nearly sent the small schooner over on its beam-ends and then disappeared from view.*
>
> *Within a few days the flying sea serpent, Zubdee Effendi said, was reported off the mouth of the Nile at Damietta, the port of Candia, in Crete, and off the island of Mytilene, where it was stated to have rammed and sunk a felucca laden with currants because one of the crew struck the reptile in the eye with a pomegranate. Sponge divers and pearl fishers in the Aegean Sea are reported to be taking a rest until the sea serpent has been destroyed."* [11] (For more on this case, see **FT248:38**.)

In 1929 a winged serpent was allegedly netted by Thomas Bowen and four others:

> *Beach Haven, N.J. – A fish ceases to be a fish when it grows wings spreading nine feet [2.7m], develops eyes in its ears, a five-foot [1.5m] tail and two feet each equipped with two toes. It becomes a sea monster. According to the tale by Thomas Bowen, fisherman, it was a sea monster and not a fish that caught in his net. Finding the weight too great for him, Bowen called for four other fishermen to help him. The five struggled from shortly before seven in the morning until eleven. The monster they finally beached weighed 440 lb [200kg], measured nearly 12ft [3.7m] and presented a cream-coloured front and a royal purple back, the story goes.* [12]

I located the last account of a winged sea serpent in a few 1938 newspapers. We may wonder what the startled crew of the fishing boat saw off Gloucester: "Boston, July 28 – (INS) – Sea serpents have gone streamlined and modern. The crew of the fishing boat *Giuseppe* today avowed that 35 miles [56km] off Gloucester they saw a sea monster of the 1938 model. It was 50ft [15m] in length, had a head like a horse, and a set of wings like an airplane." [13]

The winged sea serpent may belong only to the legends and yarns of the seas, but that does not explain the genuine puzzlement inspired by some of these accounts.

NOTES

1. 'A Sea Monster', *Daily Inter Ocean*, Chicago, Illinois, 18 Jun 1881; *Alton Telegraph*, Alton, Illinois, 4 Aug 1881; Ohio, Athens, 4 Aug 1881; *The Athens Messenger*, Athens, Ohio, 4 Aug 1881; *The Indiana Progress*, Indiana, Pennsylvania, 18 Aug 1881.

2. *The Daily Inter Ocean*, Chicago, Illinois, 26 Aug 1892.

3. 'Sea Serpent Season', *Fort Wayne Gazette*, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 7 Jun 1896.

4. 'Schooner Was Owned By Bugs. Strange Marine Monster Also Encountered by the Slater on Trip From Havana', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 12 Dec 1901.

5. 'Sea Serpent With Wings. Marine Monster, Seen by Celtic's Passengers, Chases Whales', *The Washington Post*, Washington, DC, 5 Jue 1911; 'They Were All Sober But Saw Sea Serpent. The Monster Had Wings And Frequently Cleared The Water Ten Feet. An All This Is True, Say Passenger and Crew of Steamer Celtic, Arriving at New York Yesterday Morning', *Miami Herald*, Miami, Florida, 5 Jun 1911; 'Winged-Serpent After Whale. Passengers And Crew Of White Star Liner Tell Of Terrible Monster Seen At Sea', *The Montgomery Advertiser*, Montgomery, Alabama, 5 Jun 1911; 'Winged Sea Serpent Sighted At Sea. Celebrated Monster of the Deep Seen By Passengers of Good Ship Celtic; Was Chasing Whales at High Speed', *Albuquerque Journal*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 5 Jun 1911; 'Tales Of Sea Serpents Again Brought Here', *Duluth News-Tribune*, Duluth, Minnesota, 6 Jun 1911; 'Sea Serpent Appears. Passengers of Celtic Report Sighting Formidable Looking Creature', *Trenton Evening Times*, Trenton, New Jersey, 7 Jun 1911; 'Flying Sea Serpent', *The Evening Telegram*, Elyria, Ohio, 25 Aug 1911.

6. *The Waukesha Freeman*, Waukesha, Wisconsin, 8 Jun 1911.

7. *Oelwein Daily Register*, Oelwein, Iowa, 18 Jul 1911.

8. 'Wonders Of The Deep. Passengers on Ocean Steamers See Strange Marine Creatures Supposed to be Sea Serpents', *The Newport Daily News*, Newport, Rhode Island, 14 Jun 1911.

9. 'A Strange Monster. Seen From Liner – Fins First Appeared To Be Small Sails', *Lowell Sun*, Lowell, Massachusetts, 29 Aug 1916.

10. 'Weird Sea Fight Story In Port. Steamship Captain Tells of Strange Sea Monster That Spanked a Whale', *Boston Journal*, Boston, Massachusetts, 29 Aug 1916.

11. 'Winged Sea Serpent Reported In Levant. CurrantLaden Felucca Sunk When Sailor Belts Reptile With Pomegranate. Has Eyes Like Sidelights. Zooms Aloft Like Airplane – Wrecks Caciques With Figs and Pistachio Nuts', *New York Times*, New York, New York, 13 Aug 1922; 'Sea Serpent with Wings Reported', *Syracuse Herald*, Syracuse, New York, 15 Sept 1922; 'Winged Sea serpent Reported In Levant. Felucca Sunk When Sailor Pelts Reptile With Pomegranate', *New Castle News*, New Castle, Pennsylvania, 19 Sept 1922; 'Sea Serpent With Wings', *Appleton Post-Crescent*, Appleton, Wisconsin, 6 Oct 1922; 'Flying Sea Serpent Once More Comes To Cause Consternation. Officers of Greek Liner Tell Thrilling Story of Monster Hunted With Rapid-fire Guns by Men in Motorboats', *Oregonian*, Oregon, 22 Oct 1922.

12. 'Fisherman Tell of Landing Sea Dragon', *The Van Wert Daily Bulletin*, Van Wert, Ohio, 8 Oct 1929; 'Fisherman Tell of Landing Sea Dragon', *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, Kingston, New York, 24 Oct 1929.

13. 'Sea Monsters Go Streamline', *The Charleroi Mail*, Charleroi, Pennsylvania, 28 Jul 1938; '1938 Sea Serpents', *Lowell Sun*, Lowell, Massachusetts, 28 Jul 1938; 'Sea Serpent, 1938 Model, Reported', *San Antonio Light*, San Antonio, Texas, 28 Jul 1938.

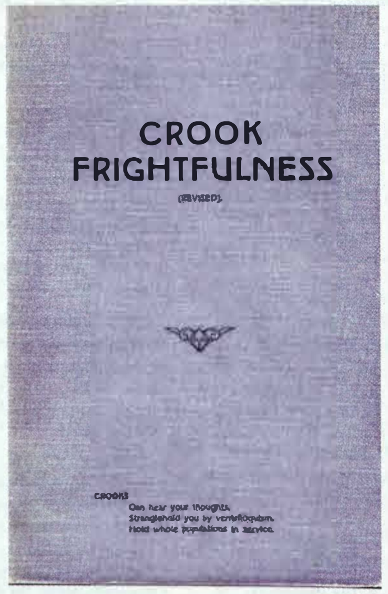
CROOK FRIGHTFULNESS

A campaign of harrassment, intimidation and ventriloquism is revealed by its victim, an East End rent collector. **DANIEL WILSON** revisits one of the strangest books ever published, and – for the first time – reveals the identity of its mysterious author...

Really the title of this book should be 'Robbery by Mental Violence,' but I chose 'Frightfulness'" so declares 'A Victim', the pseudonymous author of Crook Frightfulness. *One of the most mysterious books to be published during the inter-war years, it details the increasingly bizarre nature of a harassment campaign against the author, with the ultimate aims presumed to be robbery, abduction, violence or murder. Thankfully no such injuries ever befell the author, and in 1935 he self-published his account, motivated by a duty to alert the world of the "hidden fiendish scoundrelism" of crookdom.* [1]

Crook Frightfulness, one of the strangest books ever published, is an autobiographical account told by someone who identifies himself only as 'A Victim'. His narrative begins in London's East End in the late 1890s, where he works as a rent collector. His assiduousness – securing the evictions of many shiftless tenants, including criminals who had set up brothels, gambling houses and drug dens inside the properties – makes him unpopular with shady figures, and he is threatened during his rounds, suffering "nerve-shattering intimidation rather than violence." The intimidating incidents are described as "molestations", involving malicious stares, and he notes on reflection that, from 1912 onwards, sinister characters watch his activities, even on his leisurely weekends. Ten years later, the author has become quite prosperous, with his own business as an estate agent, but things take a turn for the worse. In July 1922, he evicts a family who have fallen behind on their rent, and from that moment on, the intimidation grows more systematic. As the author puts it: "I was now to suffer from a molestation that isolated me from everyone else." This takes the form of a persistent campaign of intimidation, but purposefully covert so as to give the appearance that the Victim is "potty". From this point, the frightfulness becomes decidedly fantastical: forced to flee Britain, the Victim recounts how the crooks' campaign of harassment had gone international, with ventriloquism now being used to taunt him: "He's no good" – "He's dopy" – "The skunk" – "The dude" – "Bum shit" – "Blast you, Arse of hell" – "Sod him out" – "Pooped out". At the 'Vital Climax' towards the book's end, the Victim explains how secret listening and sound broadcasting apparatuses are being employed against him.

> "HE'S NO GOOD"
> "HE'S DOPY"
> "BLAST YOU"
> "ARSE OF HELL"
> "SOD HIM OUT"



CROOK
FRIGHTFULNESS
(REVISED).

CROOKS
Can hear your thoughts.
Strangle-hold you by ventriloquism.
Hold whole populations in service.

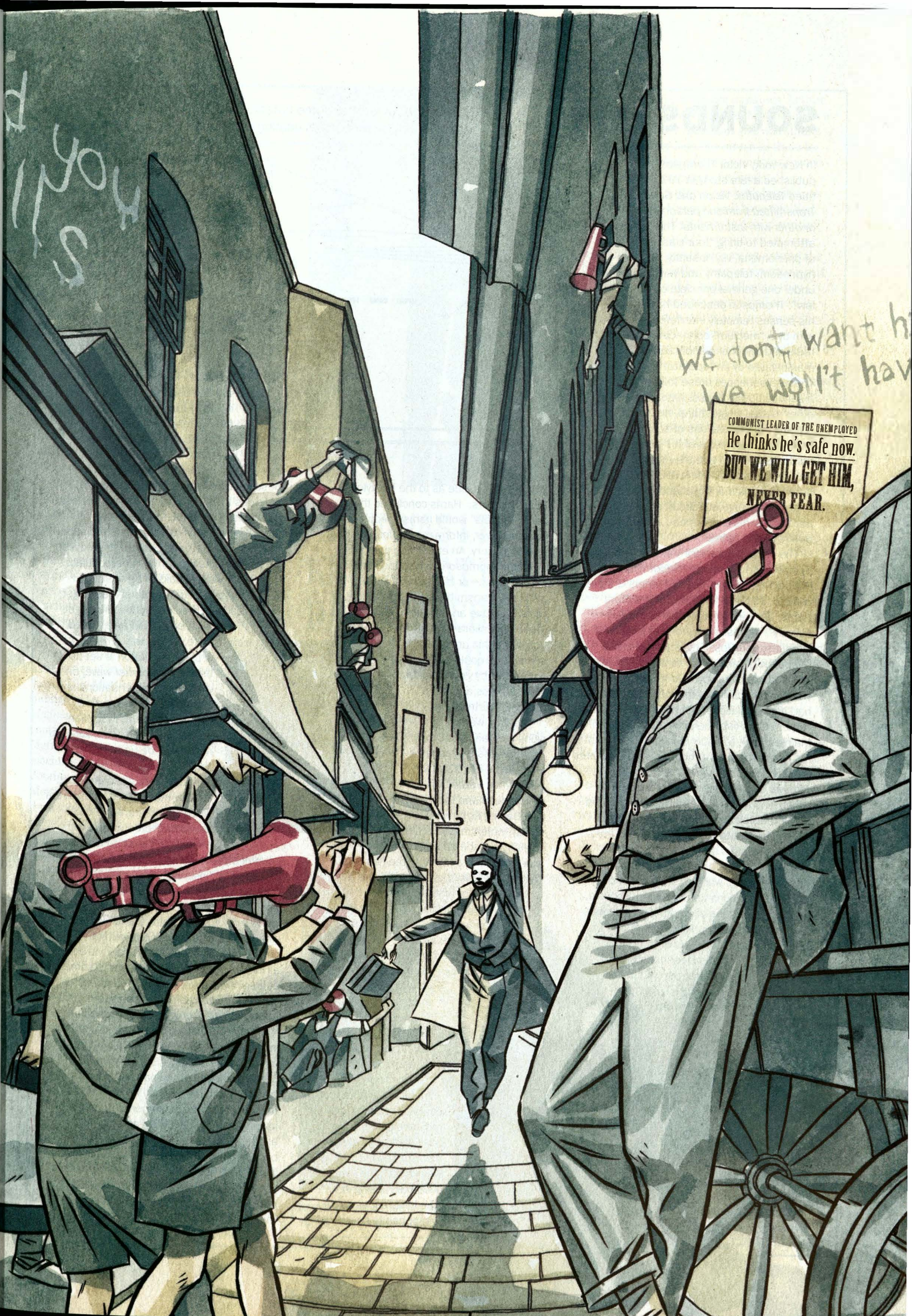
ABOVE: The revised expanded 1936 edition.

A LITERARY CURIO

The subject matter, the relentless pace and pepperings of colonial hubris intermixed with English reserve distinguish *Crook Frighfulness* as a unique and compelling piece of writing.

Upon its publication, the author sent copies to newspapers, libraries, law and education journals, science periodicals and literary magazines. Despite the appearance of a second revised edition in 1936, *Crook Frightfulness* soon fell into obscurity, becoming a little-known curio in book-dealing circles. Interest in the weird title was revived in the 1980s, starting with its citation in the

MAIN ILLUSTRATION BY WILL MORRIS


you
'll s
We don't want h
We won't hav
COMMUNIST LEADER OF THE UNEMPLOYED
He thinks he's safe now.
BUT WE WILL GET HIM,
NEVER FEAR.

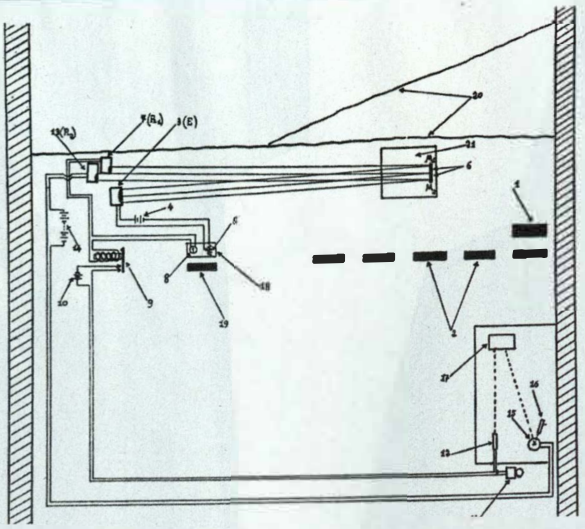
SOUNDS WEIRD

Crook Frightfulness has some notable autobiographical and part-autobiographical precursors dealing with auditory disorientations

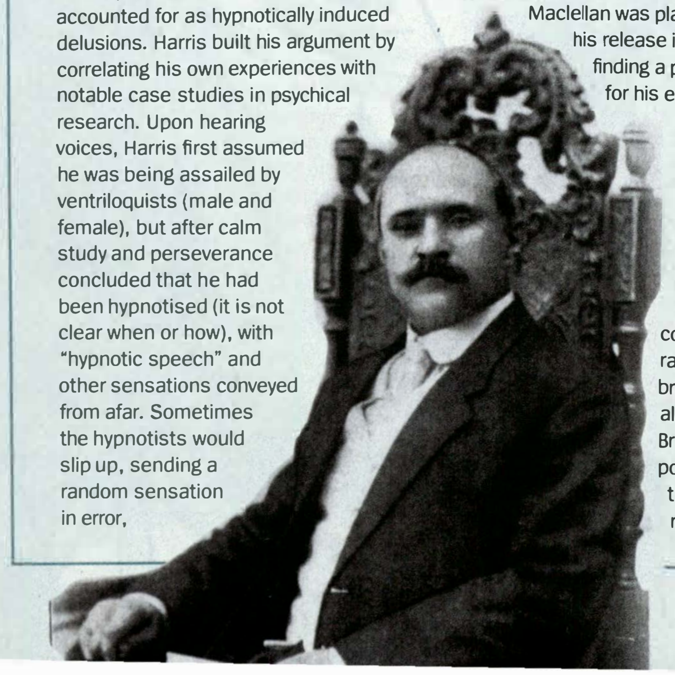
In New York, Victor Thompson self-published a rare study in 1910 titled *Telepathic Vision and Sound: Transmitted from one person to another with Instruments*. This book attempted to bring "four classes of phenomena, viz., insanity, hypnotism, telepathy and wireless, under one general principle or law". Thompson described having his senses remotely interfered with by a "medium" connected to radio and telephone apparatus, manipulated by an "operator". These experiences arose following a serious flu-like illness. Among other mental suggestions, he would receive the impressions of sound or voice through parts of his body, compelling him to give the errant bodypart a "whack" for relief. The book contains many quotations from various textbooks, along with circuit diagrams, to account for his experiences and to warn others of this "crime".

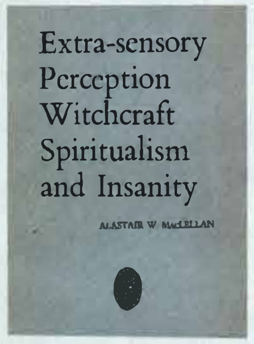
The second noteworthy example is *Of Spiritism: i.e., Hypnotic Telepathy and Phantasms – their Danger* (Francis Griffiths, London, 1913) by the Hon John William Harris, an "outspoken victim of modern sorcery". It presents a world of political intrigues, penniless English nobility and telepathic paranoia. Harris was well travelled and had been employed in India for some years in both civil and military capacities. He had prickly relations with his brother, Edward James Harris (who became the 4th Earl of Malmesbury), to whom he attributed much of his woe following a rumour Edward circulated casting doubt on Harris's sanity (allegedly to cover one of Edward's own misdeeds, which isn't disclosed). Harris's book forms a boldly autobiographical culmination of his two previous studies (*Inferences from Haunted Houses* and *Haunted Men* and *The Pseudo Occult*), exposing criminal hypnotist gangs who are able to remotely convey sensations to targeted individuals. All the phenomena of spiritualism are thus accounted for as hypnotically induced delusions. Harris built his argument by correlating his own experiences with notable case studies in psychical research. Upon hearing voices, Harris first assumed he was being assailed by ventriloquists (male and female), but after calm study and perseverance concluded that he had been hypnotised (it is not clear when or how), with "hypnotic speech" and other sensations conveyed from afar. Sometimes the hypnotists would slip up, sending a random sensation in error, giving Harris a clue as to the lifestyles of the instigators. Harris concluded that such "rascals" would harass people in this way for power, information or for the sheer love of trickery. An effect also mentioned by Victor Thompson is described, where impressions – or "soundings" – are arbitrarily transmitted to the percipient in order to gauge an emotional response as a means of calibration. Harris noted that his unpleasant sensations could be averted somewhat by good company, cheerfulness and other engaging distractions.

The final work worth citing in relation to *Crook Frightfulness* is Alastair W Maclellan's *Extra-Sensory Perception, Witchcraft, Spiritualism and Insanity* (CW Daniel, Rochford, 1958), which methodically investigates the auditory experiences of a 'Mr X' at the hands of a "Witch Cult" (Mr X is eventually revealed to be the author himself, writing in third person). Returning from India after WWII, Maclellan was placed in an asylum. Upon his release in 1951, he set about finding a physical explanation for his experiences, drawing on physiological, technical and occult literature. He translated into English the papers of Ferdinando Cazzamalli, a researcher in psychobiophysics who theorised that telepathy could be accounted for by radiant electromagnetic brain activity. Maclellan also studied the "Wever Bray effect": the electrical potentials arising in the inner ear as a response to sound stimulus – and correlated this with the contentious claims made by Eugene Osty proposing the existence of an "invisible substance" emanating from mediums during acts of telekinesis (see diagram). Armed with these sources, Maclellan posits that a malicious 'medium' can emulate a wireless set: creating a mental "carrier wave" of alternating electromagnetic brain radiation, and then modulate voices onto this wave for the percipient to involuntarily demodulate. This carrier wave is said to be sustained by willpower coupled with a nervous angst, and to maintain the connection the target must be kept in an agitated state. In this way a network of communication is set up through the carrier wave, on which various sensations are broadcast. To deliberately confuse matters, Maclellan states that basic ventriloquism might also be used by the 'cult'.



ABOVE: Apparatus used by Eugene Osty in his experiments to detect the alleged 'invisible substance' emitted by mediums during telekinesis. With the seated medium attempting to move a remote object by concentration, any interruptions in the infra-red beams cause an electric bell to sound (From *Supernormal Aspects of Energy and Matter*, E Osty, 1933). **BOTTOM:** Victor Thompson, whose senses were interfered with by a "medium".





Extra-sensory Perception Witchcraft Spiritualism and Insanity
ALASTAIR W MacLELLAN

These titles are significant, as they mark the start of an era when extant literature could provide afflicted writers with enough evidence to articulate counter-arguments against the traditional diagnosis of "insanity". Emerging texts traversing physical science, psychology and the occult were particularly useful.

Thompson's, Maclellan's and Harris's writings describe very similar auditory complaints, and the writers' conclusions all involve psychical phenomena to some degree. This makes *Crook Frightfulness* all the more remarkable, as despite a tentative reference to the possibility of hypnotism, the Victim's experiences are accounted for in wholly practical terms: ventriloquism, megaphones and physical apparatus. Because the arc of the narrative begins plausibly, with the gradual introduction of these mysterious assailments and their investigation, it makes for an engaging and memorable read. In this respect, the book actually delineates the genesis of the malady and is therefore an invaluable document charting the onset of auditory hallucination, the causes of which still puzzle the medical profession today.

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bibliography of *A Mad People's History of Madness*,[2] and later its coverage in *Bizarre Books*, compiled by book-dealers Russell Ash and Brian Lake[3]. In 2007 the title was featured on a blog maintained by Nigel Burwood – owner of Any Amount of Books on Charing Cross Road.[4] Elsewhere, in 2011, the researcher Roger Boyle compiled a map of all the Aberystwyth locations mentioned in *Crook Frightfulness*.[5]

The psychoanalyst Melitta Schmideberg reviewed the book in 1937, describing it as a record of "the persecutory delusions of a madman".[6] Indeed, it has been frequently dismissed as such, but has evaded serious study owing to the mysteries surrounding its authorship. Schmideberg's review is immediately preceded by her review of an actual crook's autobiography – *John Worby's The Other Half: The Autobiography of a Spiv* – where she notes that: "autobiographies of crooks are fashionable". Certainly, in the 1920s and 30s, villainy exercised the public imagination, as shown by the era's burgeoning crime fiction genre, of which *Crook Frightfulness* is the surreal flipside.

Another reviewer, writing as "Fidelio" in *The Border Telegraph*, presents a more measured explanation: that the Victim's persecution mania grew out from genuine intimidation: "It is a psychological curiosity; the emanation of some obsession which may have originated from some real persecution that had in time turned the brain. In any case, one's sympathies must go out in full measure to such a victim".[7]

A famous narrative similarly born of the extremities of human experience is found in James Tilly Matthews' account, edited and published by John Haslam in *Illustrations of Madness*, 1810.[8] A local "Air Loom Gang", comprising various characters, was said by Matthews to operate a thought-influencing machine near the asylum where he was detained.[9] Years prior to his incarceration, Matthews did suffer genuine victimisation during a politically tumultuous period, which chimes with the experiences of the Victim.

Unlike Matthews's writings, the self-published *Crook Frightfulness* is not defused by any discrediting editorial prefaces from authorities in the medical profession. In the same vein as August Strindberg's *Inferno*, the Victim appears empowered by self-publication; from cover to cover, he retains his autonomy. In this respect, there are more apt English-language comparisons to be found following this tradition (see page 32). It's worth summarising a few exceptional autobiographical (and part-autobiographical) titles, lucidly dealing with auditory disorientations before examining *Crook Frightfulness* in detail.

'A VICTIM' IDENTIFIED

Devotees of 'A Victim' and his intensely curious book may be intrigued to hear that the author's identity can at last be revealed.

Crook Frightfulness was written by Arthur Herbert Mills (1874–1952), a rent collector, estate agent, property owner and builders' agent, born on 5 October 1874 in Bow, London, the third eldest of six children. Mills came from an East End family and worked his way up from a builder's clerk to an estate agent, owning his own agency by around 1905 with an office at 2 Glenavon Road, Stratford. Both his father and grandfather, John Mills junior and senior, were timber merchants. Mills's grandfather went missing in May 1880 – this may have been connected to the bankruptcy of his East India Dock Road business at the start of the year. On 18 May, he was found drowned in the Lea Cut; the circumstances surrounding his death are unknown. Arthur Mills's father, by contrast, set himself up as a travelling timber merchant and was able to circumvent any local downturn in trade by venturing further afield beyond the poverty-stricken districts where he lived.

"HOW WAS I TO KNOW THAT I HAD OPENED THE DOORS OF HELL?"

The story of his grandfather's lugubrious end in the Lea Cut may well have instilled in the young Mills a drive to gain a position of financial security by acquiring an ever-growing collection of properties around the East End. Evidently, he never overcame this sense of peril, as his book reflects a very middle class fear: that everything one has worked for – one's status and 'respectability' – might suddenly be stolen away.

On first being promoted to rent collector by his builder employer, Mills was enthusiastic about the new post, but in *Crook Frightfulness* he laments: "How was I to know that I had of my own volition opened the doors of Hell – to turn me from a cheery, care-free youth of 18 to a prematurely aged man, terrified by horrible men, threatening my sanity and my life?" In order to fulfil his obligations to his employer, certain tenants who had long defaulted on their rent payments had to be confronted. The East End was a deeply deprived, overcrowded place at the turn of the century; drunken violence, criminality and prostitution were rife. Mills, with his keen sense of morality, sought to evict non-paying tenants who were said to run houses of "ill-repute", resulting in several threatening altercations. At one point, he writes that an attractive lady attempted to seduce him, but he remained steadfast, prompting the woman to hurl a "savage oath".

At the age of 34, on 11 January 1909, Mills enrolled in the newly formed Territorial Army, volunteering in his spare time with the Royal Garrison Artillery in the Essex East Anglian Heavy Battery. He was unusually old, as the average age of recruits was at least 10 years younger. The enlistment contract covered a four-year period, but Mills was compelled to purchase his discharge on 10 February 1910 owing to his father's ill health (John Mills died from pneumonia

GLENAVON. RD PEACE PARTY
OUR THANKS TO THE BOYS

ABOVE: Glenavon Road in 1919. AH Mills's office was at 2 Glenavon Road, directly behind this scene. **TOP:** A microphone tree. Crooks are everywhere, and "can hear your thoughts".

eight days later).

Mills's one-man estate agency on Glenavon Road was first advertised in trade directories under the name of Arthur *Henry* Mills. Was this a misprint, or an early attempt to throw crooks off his trail? (This is unlikely, as the persecution didn't get into its stride until 1922, although Mills recollects many isolated incidents of a threatening nature prior to this). One feasible explanation is that Mills had incorporated the middle name of his younger colleague Thomas Henry Wood, to whom he would later entrust the business during his travels in the colonies. Wood, born in Upper Clapton in 1890, began working as a house decorator for Mills's estate agency when he was a teenager, and later became involved in the running of the business. He had also enrolled in the same Territorial Army unit with Mills, enlisting on the same day (Wood likewise purchased his discharge a couple of months after Mills). In 1931, whilst Mills was in the West Indies, the business was restyled under Thomas Henry Wood's name.

Mills did not serve in WWI. This period is skipped over in the book, but records reveal that during this time he sampled married life. Wood was one of the witnesses at the wedding on 22 March 1916. The 41-year-old Mills married Charlotte Elizabeth Adams (23) of Faringford Road, just around the corner from his office. The marriage was to prove disastrous, lasting only three-and-a-half months before Charlotte filed for divorce in early June. She claimed that Mills was incapable of consummating the marriage due to "frigidity or impotency or malformation of the parts of generation… and that such incapacity is incurable by art or skill," and ordered that Mills pay the cost of the proceedings. The court ordered physicians Sir William Maurice Abbot-Anderson and Dr Edwin Francis White to examine both Mills' and Adams' "organs of generation" for any signs of anomalies or impediments. It is not clear whether Mills underwent this humiliating procedure, but the divorce proceedings were discontinued in November, and are thought to have been resolved at a later date. Illuminatingly, in the preface of *Crook Frightfulness*, Mills sets out a moral code where he states, regarding abstinence, "physiology teaches us that continence is quite natural, it going to the use of the body; it has no evil effects, neither does continence cause atrophy, though practised for any number of years."

"SPEAKERS WERE DENOUNCING ME AND AROUSING MEN AGAINST ME"

LIVING DEATH

Mills made efforts to find what he deemed "good tenants" for his rental properties. But in the economic slump after WWI, unexpected loss of employment could drastically alter a tenant's circumstances – and a non-paying tenant was a "bad tenant". By his own admission, Mills found it hard to evict tenants who had fallen on hard times, but their furniture and belongings would have to be thrown out into the street by the bailiffs if no payment was forthcoming. There is no evidence to suggest Mills was a profiteering "slum landlord", but their ubiquity brought about the growth of socialist militancy in the form of tenants' and unemployed workers' movements led by figures such as Wal Hannington, a London trade unionist who became feted as "leader of the unemployed".[10] His National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement was seen as a subversive organisation by the government. Hannington gave his support to the organisation of tenants' action groups that would help evicted occupants reinstall salvaged furniture into reclaimed properties.

To Mills, at this time, it seemed as though his regular intimidations were becoming more politicised. He writes that in 1922, "a man told me that at the local meetings of the unemployed, speakers were strongly denouncing me and arousing men against me for seeking to eject a poor man from his house." But Mills argued that the family "had been under notice to quit for many long months, and had never once asked for any consideration or made any effort to pay."

As mentioned earlier, it was when Mills evicted the defaulting tenant in July 1922 that he noted an increase in intimidation. Shortly after the eviction, he received a visit from the "Communist leader of the unemployed" who spoke about the rights of workers and demanded tenancy of an empty house adjoining Mills's office. Mills replied that the house wasn't under his management. He later reasoned that, "in all probability the [evicted] tenant relied on help from the Communist leader of the unemployed. I knew that this leader was said to be in Russian pay, and that his followers numbered thousands." One wonders if the "Communist leader of the unemployed" was Wal Hannington himself; if not, it was most likely somebody acquainted with Hannington.

ABOVE: The corner of Barking Road, with Green Street to the left. "As I descended from a tram at the corner of Green Street, Barking Road, I passed a gang of clean-shaven, blue-suited, well-dressed big men… and some fat young women, also nicely dressed. They all stared fixedly at me as I passed, making low remarks.."

Mills began taking a "man" (possibly Wood) on his travels, particularly when collecting rents. Everywhere he went, people would give him threatening looks and taunts. One fellow, said to stand near Mills's office every night, stared strangely, and Mills remarked to his "man" about it, who replied: "It was… a mysterious stare in which he tried to put a meaning, if you understand, sir, for you to be puzzled what he meant." On another occasion, Mills and his colleague witnessed an incident suggestive of an aborted robbery, prompting his man to comment: "I expect that car belongs to those gents and they meant to rob you and get off in that motor car."

An exasperated Mills once asked his "man", "Why do they do it?" prompting the reply, "That's easy, sir. It's to frighten and affect one mentally, if you understand, sir. To weaken one's nerves."

If we accept that Mills faithfully recounted these conversations when writing the book, the colleague's comments could be seen as either a wind-up, an indulging of his employer's eccentricities or an indication of the reality of the persecutions at this stage.

In August 1924, Mills found that papers left in the office were mysteriously vanishing, including business papers and documents from his youth (it was only in 1931 that he realised they had been deliberately stolen, when he heard voices referencing the missing documents). "Molestations" were frequently perceived from men of criminal appearance, as well as the unemployed, down and outs, "public house loafers", street hawkers and road workers. This continuous persecution was later described by Mills (in the revised edition) as a "living death" – a term that evokes the experiences of the unemployed at this time; one unemployed youth described his situation in exactly the same words in the study *Disinherited Youth*.[11] Borrowing the classical psychological term, Mills writes of attempts to instil in him an "inferiority complex," a state of mind that is curiously mirrored in the collected autobiographical sketches of the inter-war unemployed, *Memoirs of the Unemployed*.[12]

ABOVE: A "poop" at Fort Montagu, Nassau, Bahamas. "The line of cars was filled with people who shouted in an organised way, in batches of two or three: 'Get out sod, we don't want you.' They call this a 'poop'."

The situation became intolerable and Mills resolved to leave for Auckland, New Zealand. He departed on 18 December 1924. The ship's records show he travelled under the name of 'Herbert Mills', gave an address on Halley Road, Manor Park, and stated his occupation as "foreman".[13]

The journey was peaceful enough, but, incredibly, Mills came to believe his persecutors were also travelling on board ship. During a church service, he heard a nearby voice say: "He thinks he's safe now. But we will get him, never fear."

He remained in Auckland for three years, enduring intensified stalking, staring and barbed remarks, orchestrated by "all the underworld". The hellish experiences compelled him to journey back across the Pacific to try settling in the British West Indies instead.

VENTRILOQUIAL TERRORISM

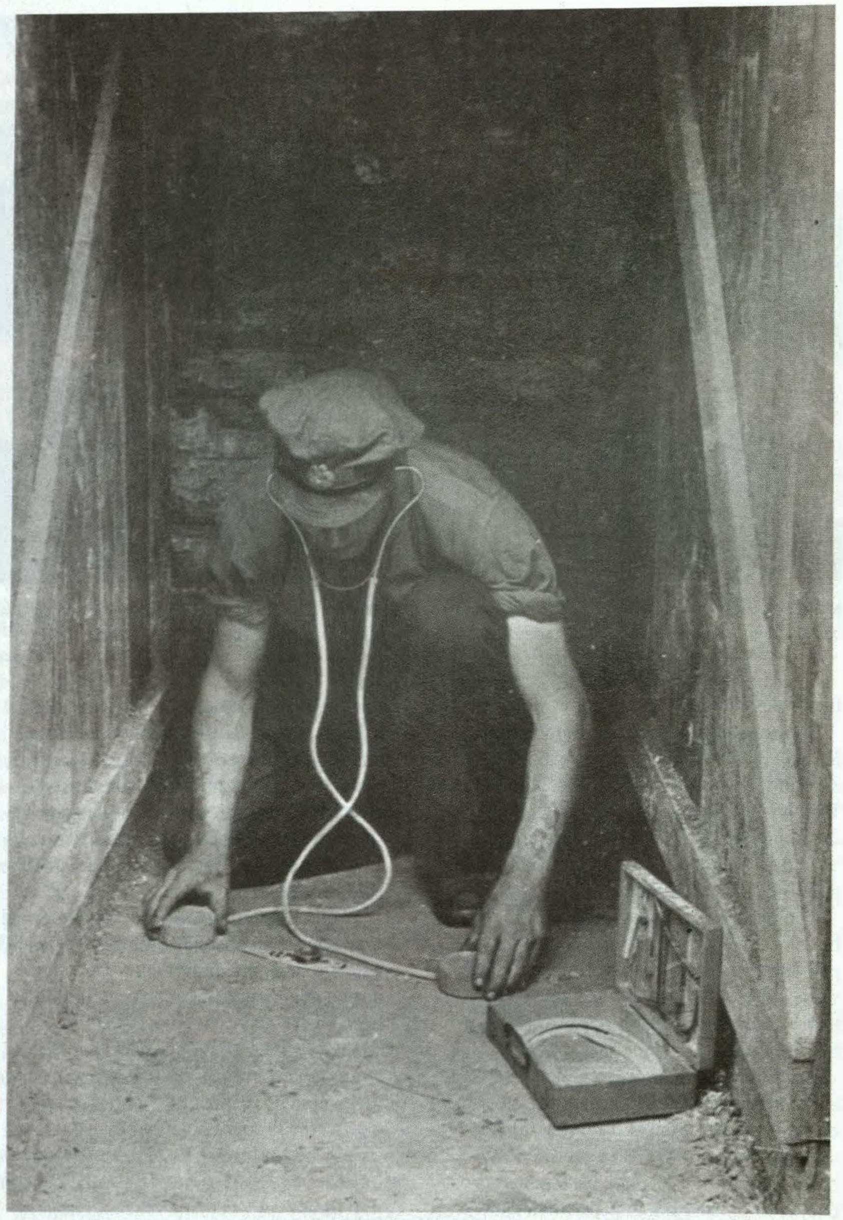
From 1928 to 1932, Mills experienced persecution worse than ever before in the West Indies, forcing him to criss-cross between islands to escape the "uncomic opera" of orchestrated annoyances. It was during this period that he was subjected to what he called a "poop": during a visit to a beach, a man shouted through a megaphone "We don't want him! We won't have him!" prompting an eruption of abuse from a long row of parked cars facing the sea, chanting together: "Get out sod, we don't want you."

Whereas in the past, Mills perceived such vocal utterances as having definite origins, things became more confused when unseen speakers "threw" their voices from afar and imitated different voices. The use of ventriloquism was uncovered by Mills when he told off some children who were playing whilst apparently uttering terrible abuse:

"One day, unable to stand the horror any longer, I walked over to the children and reprimanded them. They looked at me in blank astonishment. While I was thus talking to these children, I noticed that one of the boys seemed to have said, 'He's pooped out,' but actually his mouth was shut with a long piece of sticky toffee. At the same time I noticed the man. When he saw he had been discovered, he laughed and said, 'Sod you'."

"Ventriloquial terrorism", as he termed it, may appear an absurd complaint, especially when nobody in earshot ever seemed to notice or comment. Some ventriloquial harassment was even, inexplicably, spoken through megaphones. Historically, ventriloquism was closely allied with stage magic and its techniques – now well known – necessarily concealed by performers to safeguard their livelihoods.[14] Mills may well have been acquainted with Henry Cockton's popular novel *Valentine Vox*, charting the pranks and acoustic deceptions of a young ventriloquist.[15] It is unlikely that any modern reader could suspend disbelief enough to accept the efficacy of Valentine's ultra-directional voice-throwing antics. Of course, for Mills, being a practical man afflicted in this way, ventriloquism was a viable explanation for his uncanny auditory experiences.

In addition to ventriloquism, a thought 'listening' apparatus was also used. This was first experienced in February 1929 when, whilst reading in his hotel, Mills found that as he read, the words would be called out. He searched for any periscopes or mirrors, but could not find any. Later, he formulated the concept of an apparatus used for "listening in" on his thoughts. Valve technology and its application to amplification might have informed this idea, but Mills did not speculate on the workings. The apparatus was alleged to function as a super-amplifier, so powerful that even unvoiced thoughts could be heard by amplifying sub-vocal articulation (when the mouth subconsciously forms words). It is



TOP: The Geophone was used in counter-mining operations as a hyper-sensitivised form of dual-stethoscope. ABOVE: South Beach Terrace, Aberystwyth. RIGHT: The title page of *Crook Frightfulness*.

implied that the sound of one's breathing is acoustically coloured by tiny variations of mouth shape: "They could only hear your thoughts by means of the fact that when you think (in 95 cases out of a hundred) you actually shape your words in your throat and mouth. When we breathe through our mouth, it is possible for these fiends to hear your thoughts and reading with their listening apparatus. Sometimes they can hear your thoughts when breathing through your nose."

Attempts to hold the breath were apparently effective but not practical. With the "listening apparatus", headphone-clad crooks could hear everything, such as a heartbeat, and even the movement of an eyelid upon a pillow. The listening apparatuses of the WWI counter-mining operations are cited as a probable antecedent – these were either acoustic (as in the early Geophone) or electrical (as in the pre-valve telegeophone), but obviously neither were powerful enough to achieve the impossible sonic feats that Mills describes.

A combined listening and broadcasting apparatus was also theorised. A rare leaflet accompanying some copies of *Crook Frightfulness* stated that: "They are able to make sounds, such as someone walking right near to you, or coming up the stairs, or overhead, or knocking or ringing at the street door. In fact they use a sound 'outfit' like the BBC."

It was in the British colonies of the West Indies that Mills abandoned his theory of Communist involvement – the intimidation came from *everybody*. He found that "no class or colour is free from the suspicion of crookedness," with men and women all partaking in the persecutions, along with government officials and doctors. As he put it: "They sucked up my peace of mind as a cat laps up milk." With effort, however, he could "attain a degree of impersonal interest in the molestations, from the point of view of their being well-constructed." On various nights he was subjected to abuse sung in time with the "depraved" rhythms of gramophone records played nearby; subtle gas attacks prevented him from sleeping, and centipedes and rats were put into his room. In a custom-made inside jacket pocket, Mills kept written notes detailing the incidents that befell him. These would form the basis for *Crook Frightfulness*.

21ST CENTURY SCHIZOID MAN

All the key features of modern day 'gang-stalking' as reported by the Targeted Individual community (see **FT228:18–19; 272:23; 273:44–47**) are to be found in *Crook Frightfulness*.[16] It would be churlish to write off this phenomenon as the product of tortured imagination when society, increasingly, fosters the emergence of far-ranging information gathering/disseminating systems that ultimately gravitate towards the very same intrusions delineated in schizophrenic narratives. In the light of this, the phenomena are at least a *potential* reality.

Some comfort may be drawn from VN Binhi's level-headed and well-researched study *Electromagnetic Mind Control: Fact or Fiction?*, demonstrating that wireless consciousness-penetrating technologies at present remain in the realms of science fiction (although this hasn't stopped opportunistic patentees pre-empting them).[17]

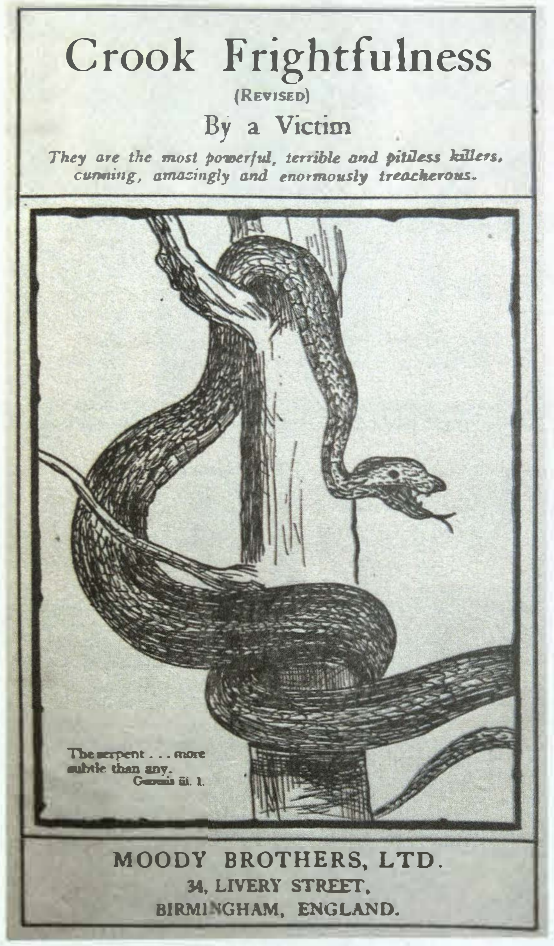
For Mills, unseen voices came daily: "The English real estate sod will have to go" – "We'll get your brain to snap" – "We won't lose you, you big beautiful fairy!" – "We follow thee, o'er land and sea, just like the busy, busy bee – you big buzzing ****!" – "You're radioed, my dear, to every country in the world; aren't you too, too popular – you lousy swine?"

When Mills attempted to travel to America, his visa was declined. A new jibe became commonplace: "America doesn't want sods!"

Mills was a hospital patient at least twice during his years in the West Indies, but nothing could alleviate his complaints except the temporary solution of relocation. In March 1932, he resolved to travel back to Britain, finding dwellings in the Welsh seaside town of Aberystwyth. He found lodgings at the topmost point of Trefor Road, in a house called Ettrick Brae (now number 14). It appeared to be a comfortable vantage point overlooking parts of the town, but it proved to be "hell on earth", with constant use of the combined listening and broadcasting device dispensing threats and the "vilest of 'smut'". The usual molestations followed him during his outdoor travels too, "very cunningly arranged and designed and executed in the latest twentieth century fashion!" He left Trefor Road in January 1933.

Surprisingly, Mills married for the second time before leaving Ettrick Brae, on 13 January 1933. At the registry office, he was married to a widower named Annie Evans (née Williams), a few years older than him. They remained married until Mills died in 1952. Evans's previous husband, a travelling salesman named Thomas Llewelyn Evans, had died in 1930 at their home on Trefor Road. One witness to Mills' and Evans' marriage, Charles Roughton, appears to have worked in newspapers and had links to Birmingham, where *Crook Frightfulness* was printed. Did this man provide the impetus for its publication?

The publication of *Crook Frightfulness* in the summer of 1935 didn't have an immediate cathartic effect, as Mills found it necessary to publish a second revised edition in late 1936. Amendments were still being made to the text as late as 1943, as the British Library's revised copy bears paste-ins dated 1939 and a handwritten note in Mills's own hand, dated 1943. The note shows how his focus was shifting from acoustical apparatuses towards subtle energies: "I believe crooks hear thoughts by the breathing of the Victim. Perhaps it's by the nerves or brain or human electricity, or all these."



Crook Frightfulness

(Revised)

By a Victim

They are the most powerful, terrible and pitiless killers, cunning, amazingly and enormously treacherous.

The serpent . . . more subtle than any.
Genesis iii. 1.

MOODY BROTHERS, LTD.
34, LIVERY STREET,
BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND.

In the late 1940s, Mills was living in Aberystwyth in a converted early 20th century barracks at 6 Gogerddan Place, with one Ernest John Haines. By the early 1950s, Mills and his wife Annie were living at Clyde House on Queens Road. There are indications that Mills found solace in music, as his will mentions his "musical instruments", and one of the witnesses of the document was a local "piano and music saleman" named Harry Carter of nearby Vaynor Street. Mills also writes in his book about his love of the soothing tones of church organs. He drew a lot of strength from religion, and bequeathed much of his fortune to the Methodist Missionary Trust Association and the National Society for Promoting Religious Education. Of all his siblings – none of whom are known to have had any children – Mills had amassed the most considerable sum.

Arthur Herbert Mills died of a heart attack on 3 October 1952, aged 77, at his home. His extraordinary book, despite being overlooked for many years, represents his lasting legacy – a literary marvel and a triumph over hellish adversity. *Crook Frightfulness* is the story of a man of the Victorian era experiencing all the incipient nightmares of 20th and 21st century life – it's a powerful vision of the crisis of modernity. FT

The author wishes to thank Roger Boyle and the Ceredigion Archives for information about Ettrick Brae.

***Crook Frightfulness** will be republished in late 2013 by Strange Attractor Press.*

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

DANIEL WILSON is a sound designer, electroacoustic composer, researcher, pamphleteer and instrument builder. He records under the alias Meadow House and his album *Tongue Under a Ton of Nine Volters* is on Alcohol Records.

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11 C Cameron, et al (eds.), *Disinherited Youth: A Survey, 1936–1939*, T&A Constable Ltd, Edinburgh, 1943.

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STRANGE TALES OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Why would the US government mount a campaign of terror against one of its own citizens? ROBERT GUFFEY recounts a strange tale of state-sponsored gangstalking, top secret invisibility technology and stolen night vision goggles...

On 23 May 2013, British newspaper the *Guardian* published an article headlined "Obama to Bring US Drone Programme Out from 'Legal Shadows' of the CIA." The truth is that these drones were ushered out of the shadows long ago, at least as early as 2003. I know this is true because one of my best friends since high school has been stalked unmercifully by several of these prowling death-machines since 2003, and this blatant terrorism continues in the year 2013.

So sit back, my friend, and listen – because I've got a rather strange story to tell you…

TOP SECRET AND BEYOND

In the summer of 2003 my friend Dion Fuller was living in the Pacific Beach area of San Diego. His apartment soon became a notorious drug hangout in the neighbourhood. The cops drove by all the time, just to make sure nothing was getting *too* out of hand. One night, in the midst of another 24-hour party, some kid in his early 20s named Lee dropped by and asked if he could stay there awhile. Dion's reaction was "Sure, what the hell, why not?" The place was a party house. People were coming in and out all the time. What was one more person?

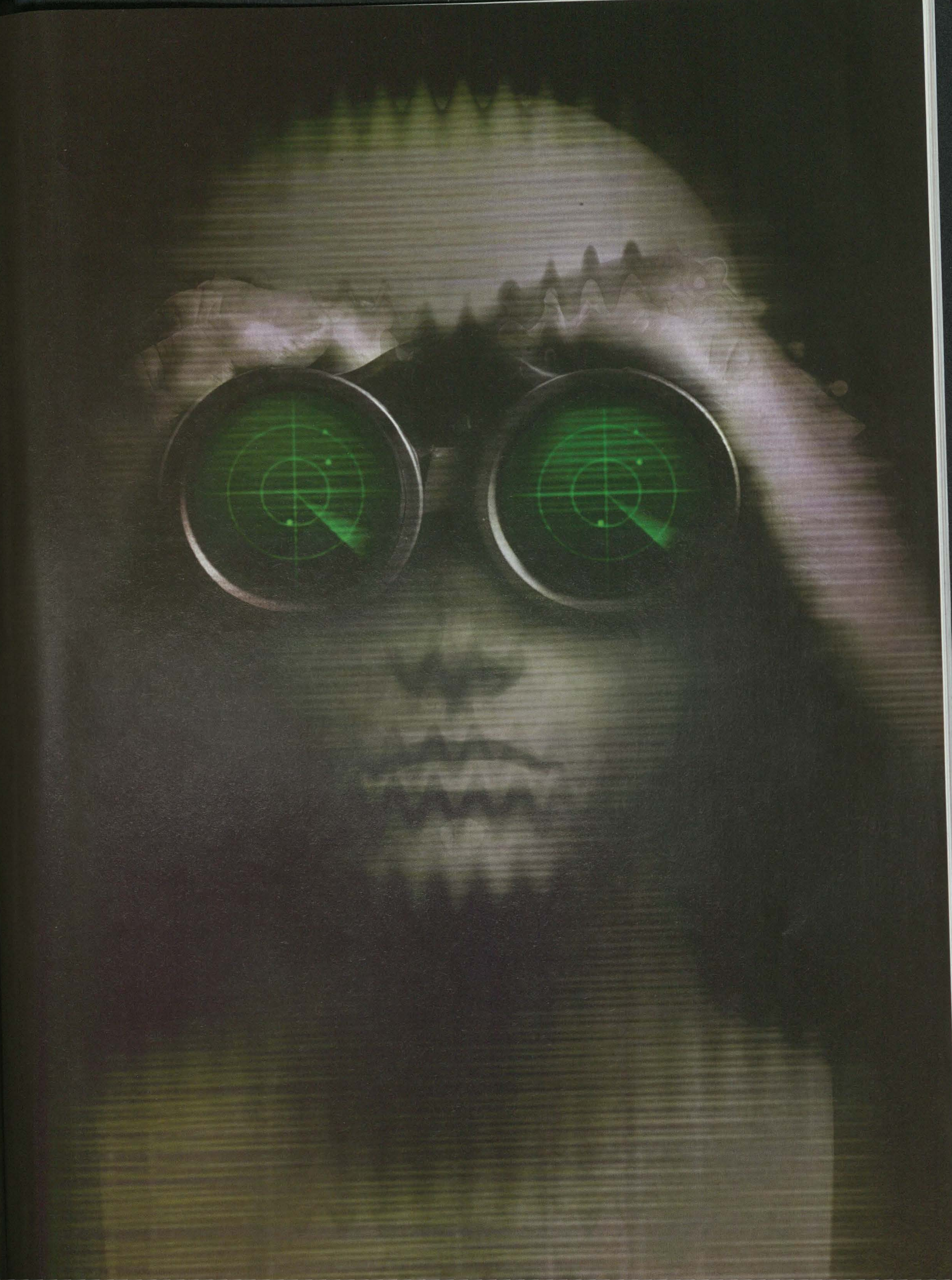
This kid, however, was different from all the drifters who had stayed at the apartment before. Lee had recently gone AWOL from Camp Pendleton, a nearby Marine base. He had taken with him: 1) 25 pairs of night vision goggles, 2) a 9mm pistol taken from the body of a dead Iraqi general, 3) a Department of Defense laptop, and 4) an entire truck. How such a feat was possible in our post-9/11 lockdown society is beyond me. The truck, of course, was not in Dion's apartment. The other three items, however, were.

Lee had the goggles – three or four of them, at least – stored in a trunk. Dion, perpetually buzzed out of his mind, didn't think there was anything odd about any of this until he saw the Department of

> ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS HAS BEEN STALKED BY THESE DEATH-MACHINES SINCE 2003

RIGHT: Dion Fuller in March of this year. He tends to attract trouble…

PHOTO: DION FULLER



Defense logo appear on the kid's laptop one evening (18 July 2003, to be exact), which is when the seriousness of the situation dawned on him.

"Hey, you can't turn that on in here," Dion said. "They can track that shit with satellites! They'll be here within seconds."

Lee just waved him away. "That's bullshit. They can't do that." Dion and a bunch of other people watched as the kid scrolled through a whole series of files marked TOP SECRET and ABOVE TOP SECRET. The file names were so technical-sounding Dion had no idea what they meant, but they seemed to be a field journal written by a team of intelligence specialists stationed in the Gulf.

Lee opened some of these files and laughed while pointing at ABOVE TOP SECRET blueprints for machines Dion couldn't even recognise.

Finally, Dion said, "Fuck this, that's it! You've got to pick up your lowjack shit and get the fuck out of here!"

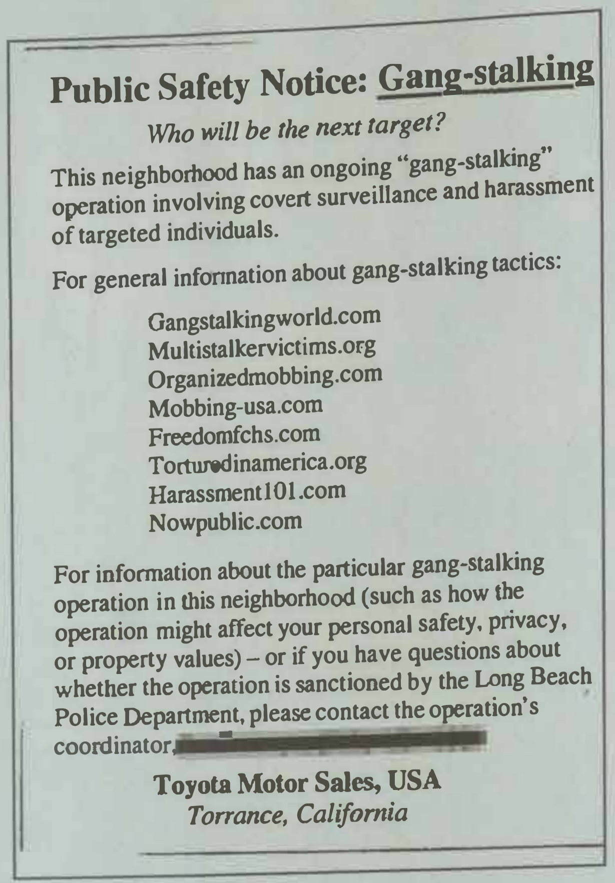
Lee refused to go.

At that point there was a knock at the door. Every drug user at the party froze while Dion opened the door. A middle-aged woman flashed an NCIS badge and identified herself as Special Agent Lita A Johnston of Naval Criminal Investigative Services. A horde of Men-In-Black-types stood behind her. The local police arrived soon afterwards, eager to take some of the credit for bringing down a nest of insidious terrorists.

To Dion's shock and awe, they arrested him and Lee under suspicion of selling military equipment to Al-Qaeda. The authorities didn't care at all about the horde of illicit substances in Dion's apartment. All they cared about were the night vision goggles. Over and over again, they demanded to know where the rest of the goggles could be found. Dion, of course, had no idea. After all, he'd only met Lee a few days before.

After an entire week of being interrogated, Dion refused to finger Lee for the crime or to testify against him in any way. This was a principle ingrained in him from having spent so much of his life in prison (he'd been in and out of jail since he was a teenager, mainly due to his unshakeable addiction to heroin). It was simply against his nature to cooperate with the authorities in any way, whether those authorities were cops on the beat, Homeland Security primates, or NCIS neo-Nazi storm troopers.

After a week of this Abu-Ghraib style treatment, the NCIS finally let Dion go. They seemed, at long last, to give up. Upon being released, Dion called me on his cell and told me everything he had undergone in the past week. Though I was disturbed, I assumed the NCIS had come to their senses and realised that Dion had nothing whatsoever to do with the theft of their precious Above Top Secret military equipment.



Public Safety Notice: Gang-stalking

Who will be the next target?

This neighborhood has an ongoing "gang-stalking" operation involving covert surveillance and harassment of targeted individuals.

For general information about gang-stalking tactics:

Gangstalkingworld.com
Multistalkervictims.org
Organizedmobbing.com
Mobbing-usa.com
Freedomfchs.com
Torturedinamerica.org
Harassment101.com
Nowpublic.com

For information about the particular gang-stalking operation in this neighborhood (such as how the operation might affect your personal safety, privacy, or property values) – or if you have questions about whether the operation is sanctioned by the Long Beach Police Department, please contact the operation's coordinator, [redacted]

Toyota Motor Sales, USA
Torrance, California

LEFT: Upon resuming communication with Dion Fuller, the author found these flyers about 'gangstalking' littering the sidewalk directly outside his apartment building.

> PERHAPS DION HAD BEEN DRIVEN INTO MADNESS BY THE CONSTANT HARASSMENT

But after a few days had passed, Dion called back with an even stranger story. He was convinced that there were people – not just cops, not just military jarheads, but *people of varying races, creeds and colours* – following him all over town, 24/7. Some of them certainly looked military, but some of them looked like normal, everyday citizens. An example: earlier that day he had walked into a 7-11 on Garnet Avenue. At least seven dudes followed him in, then followed him right back out without buying anything. They stayed on his ass, not saying anything to him, not touching him in any way, just *intimidating* him with their constant presence. This sort of thing kept happening to him over and over again, all over town.

Naturally, I thought Dion was suffering from some sort of meth-induced paranoia.

But then the situation escalated. He claimed groups of people were parked outside his apartment, watching him. This surveillance involved at least a dozen different vehicles.

I told him, "Listen – snap photos of all those license plates, or just write down the numbers, whatever you can manage, and read off the numbers to me over the phone, okay?"

He did exactly as I requested. Within 24 hours, I received from him a very long list of license plate numbers. I was determined to get to the bottom of this jabberwocky, one way or another.

A FOOD FIGHT WITH THE FEDS

I have a friend in Washington State who works for the DMV. After I read the license plate numbers to my friend over the phone, he offered to run the plates through the computer system at work. The verdict? None of the plates officially existed, which is an impossibility – unless, of course, they were government vehicles.

At this point I began to believe Dion's story.

The situation grew crazier and crazier. Dion began putting to the test the question of whether or not these perps were tailing him. At one point, this military-looking dude followed him into an AM/PM convenience store, where Dion purchased a 32-ounce Slushee. Halfway across the street, Dion spun around and yelled, "Hey, you *faggot* son of a bitch!" and tossed the Slushee in the man's face. Now, most American males would instantly freak out and grow furious at a) a 32-ounce Slushee being tossed into their face and b) having their sexuality questioned in such a verbal manner. This gentlemen did absolutely nothing at all. He just acted like a robot whose power source had been shut off.

Frustrated by all this nonsense, Dion called Lita Johnston (the NCIS agent who'd arrested him in the first place) and asked her point blank: "Excuse me, ma'am, am I being followed by the NCIS?"

She replied, "I can assure you that you are not being followed by *my* agency. By the way, Mr Fuller, I've been meaning to ask you: Is there anything you would like to get off your chest? Anything you neglected to tell us while you were in jail?" He could *hear* her smile through the phone. The message was clear.

Someone was following him, but whether or not it was the NCIS was a different question.

On another occasion, two of these jarhead spies were positioned on the other side of a wooden fence just outside Dion's kitchen window. They wouldn't leave. They just stood there for hours, staring at him. So, on a whim, Dion mixed up this concoction of Teriyaki sauce and rice and flour and salt and taffy and honey and a bunch of other crap. He stirred it up in a bowl until the stuff congealed into this weird black gruel, dashed outside, and tossed the contents of the bowl over the fence. Now completely covered in viscous slime, the two perps went running away, screaming, towards the Ralph's supermarket located across the street, but neither of them did anything to Dion in retaliation. It was as if they had been ordered not to engage with their "target" – no matter what.

FROM STREET THEATRE TO GANGSTALKING

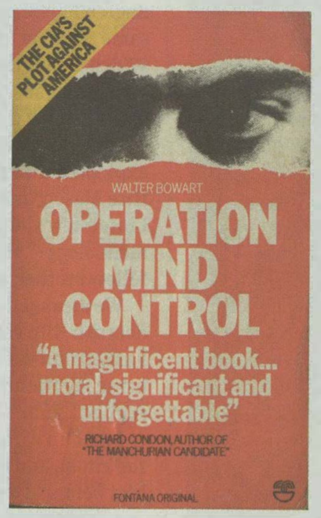
So the perps started amping up the intimidation tactics even more. They used hologram technology to project surreal images into Dion's apartment to confuse and disorientate him. They used electromagnetic nonlethal weapons to turn his brain into a migraine-addled mush. Even more disturbing, Dion began to insist that there were people in his home *he couldn't see*… invisible people who were pushing him to the ground, laughing at him, and moving furniture around his house just to screw with his head.

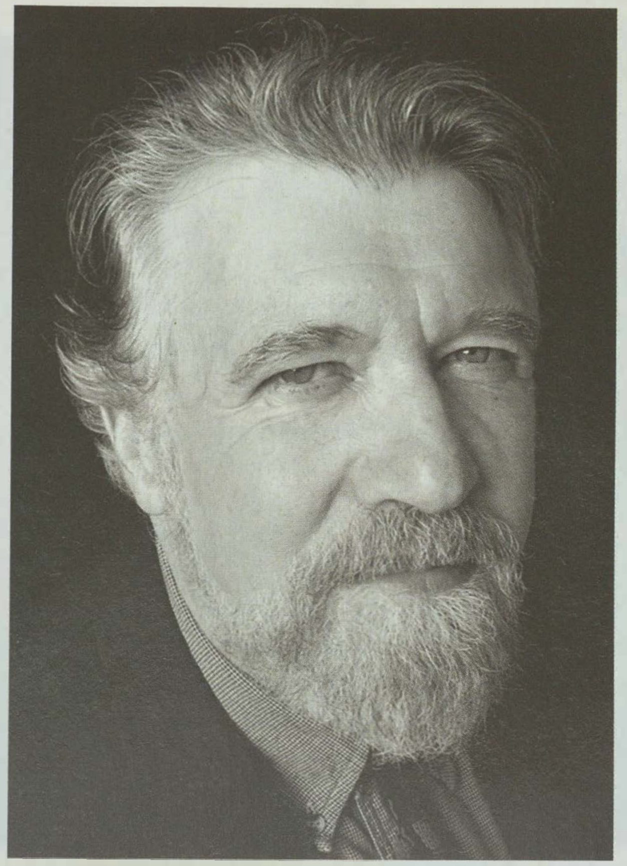
At this point, Dion assumed he was going nuts… until one day when he opened the medicine cabinet in the bathroom and saw the perps reflected in the cabinet's mirrored door. The perps were very small people, almost the size of jockeys (which led him to begin referring to them, half-humorously, as "invisible midgets"), but when Dion turned around, these intruders could no longer be seen. The perps were only visible for that one second when the mirror remained in motion.

If Dion didn't start out crazy, I thought, perhaps he had been driven into madness by the constant harassment. A close friend and I began performing intensive research. I discovered that everything Dion had been describing was also being reported by other people. Apparently, this game goes way back. The investigative journalist Walter Bowart describes these harassment techniques at least as far back as 1978 in his groundbreaking book *Operation Mind Control*. I managed to get in contact with Bowart, and it was he who directed me to a website called "raven1.net" where I found a brief article entitled "All About Street Theatre" (www.raven1.net/abtstth.htm) by Eleanor White. The article described, in exact detail, almost everything Dion had undergone during the past few months.

Back in 2003, people were calling this kind of harassment "Street Theatre" (i.e., strategic acts of constant sabotage to make an average person go crazy), but that term didn't stick. It's now generally referred to as "Gangstalking", though I don't think that's a perfect label for it either. I'm not sure what to call this brand of harassment, but I know what it is.

It's terrorism, pure and simple.


THE CIA'S PLOT AGAINST AMERICA
WALTER BOWART
OPERATION MIND CONTROL
"A magnificent book... moral, significant and unforgettable"
RICHARD CONDON, AUTHOR OF "THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE"
FONTANA ORIGINAL



ABOVE: Journalist Walter Bowart, who described harrasment techniques such as those used against Dion Fuller in his book *Operation Mind Control*.

TERRORISM, AMERICAN-STYLE

This terrorism went on from July 2003 to about February 2004. During that time, Dion contacted Lita and said, "Can I meet with you?" She said, "Of course! In fact, my superior and I will buy you breakfast." Why they would do this for a drug-addicted "madman" was beyond me.

This was Dion's brilliant plan: he'd heard, on the Pacific Beach grapevine, that it was possible the night vision goggles had been sold to the Hell's Angels so the bikers could use them in smuggling drugs over the border. Dion thought he could offer his services to the NCIS to retrieve the goggles from the Hell's Angels (as long as the NCIS gave him a nominal fee, of course). When Dion told me this, I said, "Dion, they're just going to think you've had the damn things all along, and now you want *money* for them. They're going to think it's a shakedown!"

"No, no… this will *work*!" he insisted.

The perps bombarded him with electromagnetic nonlethal weaponry the night before the scheduled meeting. I was on the phone with him when objects began shattering around Dion's head. Through the phone, I could hear plates and glasses and knick-knacks crashing and exploding. He was scared, and I had never heard Dion scared before. But then again, military-controlled poltergeists were attacking him. How would that make *you* feel? (Later, I learned from Walter Bowart that these sorts of weapons are referred to as "acoustic bullets").

Dion didn't get any sleep that night, and yet managed to keep his brunch appointment the next morning. Lita and her superior looked like they'd had even *less* sleep than him (because they were up all night leading the attack against him?). Despite what had occurred the previous evening, Dion went ahead with his "brilliant" plan. He said, "Listen, I want to make you an offer, I don't want to have food fights with the Feds anymore." Lita grinned and replied, "Oh, yeah, we all got a good laugh out of that incident." This was the *only* time Lita ever admitted that any of this was actually happening to him.

So Dion went ahead and made his proposal. The response was immediate. Lita's superior slammed his fist down on the linoleum tabletop and said, "Listen, you little shit, we don't negotiate with *terrorists*. We want those goggles back!"

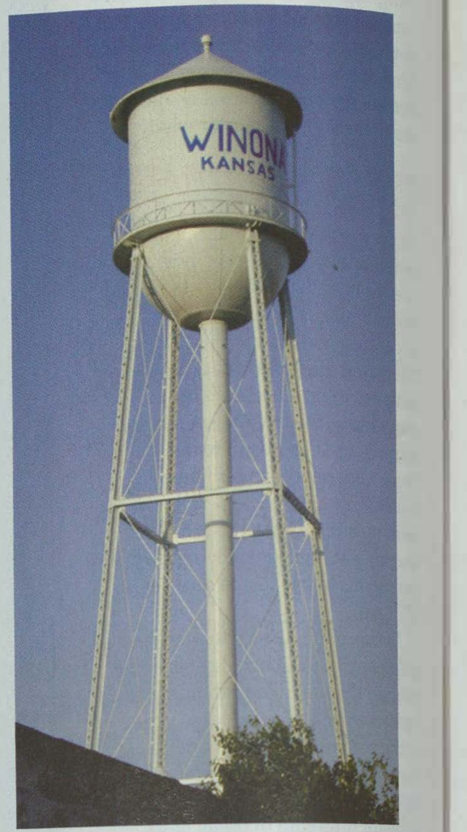
Dion replied, "Oh, you don't negotiate with terrorists? I guess you don't negotiate with *yourselves*, because you're the only ones acting like terrorists around here! You're the ones shitting all over the Constitution, pal, not me." Well, that just flipped out this living, breathing bureaucratic necktie. He screamed, "You're gonna regret this, you little son of a bitch!" and stormed out of the bagel shop, Lita in tow.

Clearly, the meeting hadn't gone as planned – for either side. They stepped up the attacks that night. Everything grew worse and worse. They started using holograms to make it seem as if there was a shadowy hand pointing a gun at Dion's skull while he lay in bed at night, trying to sleep. His leather jacket slithered across the floor for a few moments, then collapsed, inanimate again. His neighbours moved out, one by one, and were replaced with new ones who were not at all friendly and acted like Pod People from a 1950s science fiction film. Optical camouflage technology was used to make the inside of the apartment appear to be larger than the outside, like Doctor Who's TARDIS. Dion's friends came over one afternoon and actually noticed this themselves. "Say, Dion, is your apartment *growing*?" This wasn't just a product of Dion's imagination. Before this, Dion had been a fairly down-to-earth person, sceptical of outlandish conspiracy theories.

Now, he began to experience missing time, like an alien abductee. He had this odd, waking "dream" of three people breaking into his apartment, holding him down, and injecting something into his right arm. He lost weight and hair, and began pissing blood.

At this point, around February 2004, I lent him about $500.00 to buy a used van and get

MY WAR
GASLIT



ROBERT GUFFEY

ABOVE LEFT: This photo, taken in Seattle during the summer of 2004, shows Dion Fuller standing beside the van he drove from San Diego all the way to Winona, Kansas – followed by robot drones, UFOs, and gangstalkers every step of the way. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Winona, Kansas. Population: 162.

the hell out of San Diego. Lita told Dion not to leave the city, even though she claimed he was not under arrest and was free to do whatever he wanted. After all, this was a free country, wasn't it?

ESCAPE FROM SAN DIEGO

Dion took off in the van, leaving all his possessions behind, and headed for Texas. They (whoever "they" were) sent out drones, little flying saucers that followed him everywhere he went. His adventures travelling across country were so *epic* in nature, I couldn't possibly relate them all here. But here's an example.

One day he walked randomly into a bathroom in Minnesota. A man came in behind him. As Dion was washing his hands, this man said to him, "Just give them their stuff back and this will *all* end." Dion was shocked, of course. This was the first time any of these perps had ever interacted with him in a straightforward manner like this. What was even more shocking was that the guy seemed to have genuine fear in his eyes. In other words, this wasn't exactly a warning. It was more of a *plea*.

A third guy burst in at that moment. The second guy seemed to get scared of the third guy, and they both left the bathroom together.

Eventually, Dion drove all the way to Winona, Kansas (one of the smallest cities in the state) where he met two country boys whom I spoke to extensively on the phone and who were both freaking out about the "flying saucers" that were following Dion around. According to Dion, these two good old boys had picked him up off the side of the road after his van broke down and saw the drones follow him all the way to their ramshackle house located in the Middle of Nowhere, USA.

THEY SAW THE DRONES FOLLOW HIM TO THEIR HOUSE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE USA

Dion decided to settle down in Winona, which is when the surveillance finally stopped. It's possible that this town was so damn small they couldn't pull off the gangstalking activity without being noticed. (According to the official census records, there were only 162 people living in Winona as of 2010.) And, on top of that, almost everyone there owned a freakin' *gun*. So if you're being gangstalked, people, be sure to move to Winona, Kansas.

Dion stayed there for about three peaceful months, got bored out of his mind, then decided to hop in the van and move to Washington State.

I lost touch with him for about a year after that.

MEET THE INVISIBLE MAN

In 2005 Dion phoned me out of the blue and told me that he had stumbled across this website describing a form of invisibility technology like the optical camouflage technology he had experienced in San Diego. The man who invented this technology is named Richard Schowengerdt. I studied his website and noticed that Schowengerdt claimed to be a 33^{rd} degree Freemason and a member of the Scottish Rite in Long Beach, California.

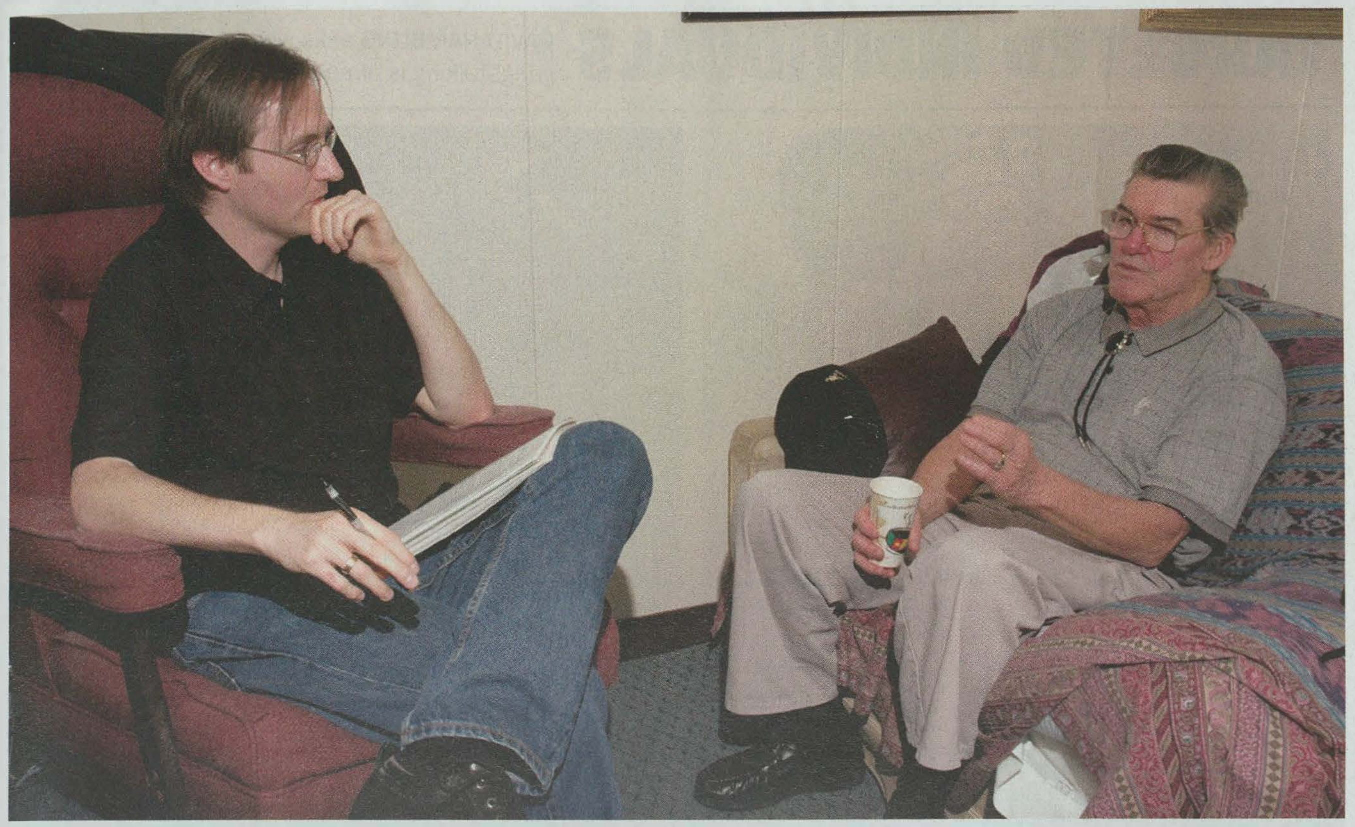
It's important to know that I'm a 32^{nd} degree Freemason and a member of the very same Scottish Rite Lodge in Long Beach. Which meant that I must have *met* this gentleman at some point, though I didn't recall this off the top of my head.

I decided to email Schowengerdt. I explained that I was a 32^{nd} degree Scottish Rite Mason, and asked, "Do you mind if I interview you about your invisibility technology?" He said that, since I was a fellow brother, that would be fine.

We arranged to meet after one of the Scottish Rite rituals on a Sunday morning. I asked him via email if it would be OK to bring my friend Dion to the interview. He replied: "If he's a friend of yours, certainly!"

I met up with Schowengerdt just before the ritual, and realised that, yes, I *had* met him before. I'd seen him perform the rituals many, many times, but never knew his name.

Dion, Schowengerdt, and I went out for lunch at a local restaurant, then drove to my office at California State University, Long Beach, to conduct the interview.



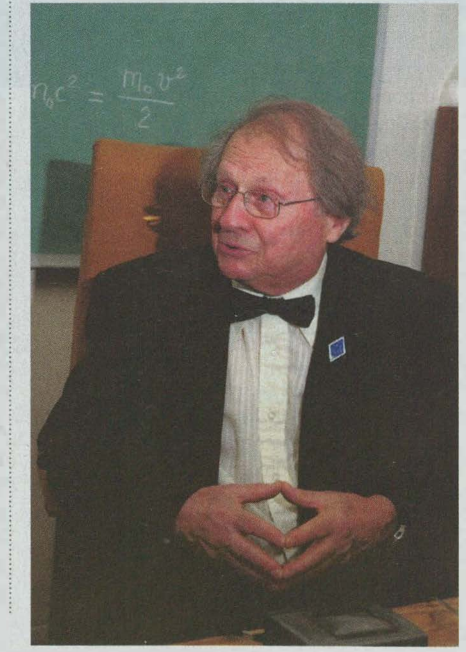
BOTH PHOTOS: MELISSA GUFFEY

ABOVE LEFT: Robert Guffey interviewing Richard Schowengerdt in March 2006. Schowengerdt is an American scientist who alleges his invisibility technology was stolen by Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) and Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS).
BELOW: Dr Lev Berger, Schowengerdt's partner in developing Project Chameleo, seen here in his laboratory in Hemet, California.

Schowengerdt was a very charming fellow and obviously very intelligent. He also had a Top Secret clearance at Northrup-Grumman for various military defence projects. During the course of the interview, everything he said tallied with Dion's tale (even though we had not yet told Schowengerdt Dion's story). Schowengerdt told us how, 10 years earlier, the Navy and a corporation based in San Diego called SAIC (Science Applications International Corporation) had come all the way down to his laboratory in Hemet, California, to investigate his fully-functional invisibility technology, then left and never called him back. He even told us that he suspected the military had stolen his invisibility technology, christened by Schowengerdt "Project Chamelo," which had been developed in collaboration with a well-respected physicist named Dr Lev Berger (known worldwide for his contributions to semiconductor technology and electro-optical camouflage).

At this point, I asked Dion to tell Schowengerdt his story. At first Schowengerdt seemed very sceptical, until Dion mentioned the bit about the mirror – and the fact that sometimes the invisibility technology wouldn't work quite as it was supposed to and the perps would appear as these flashing auras, little points of light, sort of like what some people experience when suffering from a serious migraine. Schowengerdt leaned forward in his seat and said, "That's *exactly* what it looks like when it's not done properly!" The mirror effect, he explained, happens because of the optics involved: They're putting a screen over the people wearing the camouflage suit, but not the mirror itself. Schowengerdt concluded that the whole reason they were doing this to Dion was to perform real-time experiments in controlled conditions, to see what aspects of the technology did not yet work correctly.

Dion's neighbourhood in Pacific Beach was the perfect laboratory for such experimentation – it was populated by homeless people, drug addicts, and ex-cons, who all tend not to have too many ties to the outside world. But in this *particular* case, the subject just so happened to have a friend who wrote about conspiracies on a regular basis, was a college professor, and a 32^{nd} degree Freemason; even *they* couldn't predict that plot twist!



A brief excerpt of the lengthy interview we conducted with Schowengerdt eventually appeared in the March 2007 issue of *UFO Magazine* (Vol 22, No 3) and can be seen on Schowengerdt's personal website: www.chameleo.net/ToSeeTheInvisibleMan.pdf.

UFOS OVER THE LOST COAST

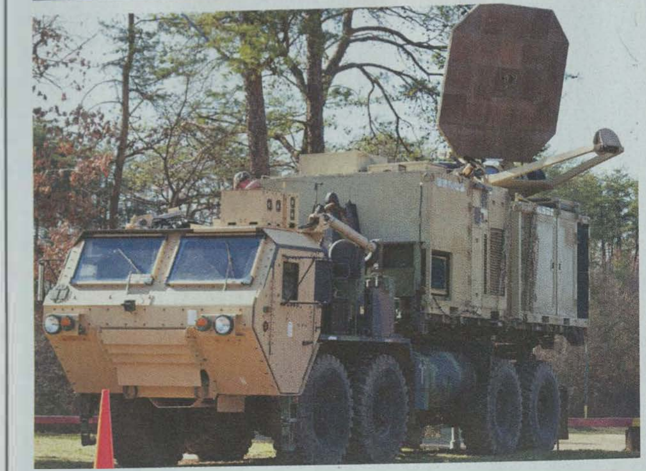
For a few years after that, Dion didn't experience much harassment until he ended up in San Francisco. Whenever there was a big war protest, the perps would start the surveillance all over again, but would cease activities when the protest was over.

A couple of years ago, Dion moved to his mother's house in Humboldt County in the middle of an isolated area called the Lost Coast, at which point the harassment started all over again, big time. We're talking classic, 1950s-style UFOs hovering over the trees, mysterious neighbours, drones whizzing around all over the place.

This area of Humboldt is filled with marijuana farmers who are protective of their crops, suspicious of outsiders, and trigger-happy to boot. As these drones began appearing in waves over the Mattole Valley,

TARGETED INDIVIDUALS

DAVID HAMBLING asks whether technological gangstalking is already a scientific possibility



BOTH PHOTOS: AFP / GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: The Active Denial system mounted on a US Marine Corps truck. **RIGHT:** A TV reporter reacts as he is targeted by the system.

While the phenomenon of gangstalking is not new, accounts by 'targeted individuals' (TIs) take on a new plausibility when the exotic technology oppressing them really exists. However, a more detailed look at their claims about actual technology is needed to make a proper assessment.

Many TIs report experiencing a microwave auditory effect: voices being beamed into the victim's head. This effect was discovered by World War II radar engineers, who found that the powerful electromagnetic pulses from their equipment produced an audible clicking sound. This appears to be the result of microscopic thermal expansion of parts of the inner ear. Thousands of pulses in quick succession create a continuous buzzing, which can be modulated into a low-fidelity means of sending signals, including the human voice. In a laboratory demonstration, the spoken numbers one to 10 were transmitted soundlessly.

A 1998 US Army report suggested the effect had potential as a non-lethal weapon, vividly described by one headline-writer as a 'Telepathic Ray Gun'. [1] By 2008, the technology was sufficiently mature for the design of a system called MEDUSA (Mob Excess Deterrent Using Silent Audio) to disperse crowds by beaming intolerable noise into their heads. [2]

However, the technology of direct-to-skull transmission has never been commercialised, and for the same reason efforts to develop nonlethal weapons using the effect were eventually shelved. The power levels for a really loud sound inside your head – loud enough to act as a deterrent, or replicate the effect of headphones turned up to maximum – turn out to be quite dangerous. One researcher told me that although it might be technically feasible, such a device would cause a cavitation resulting in brain haemorrhages. This might be a good untraceable weapon for stealthy assassinations, but it wouldn't be much use for harassment.

The Pentagon does have methods for projecting focused sounds over long distances. Hypersonic Sound is a technology developed by Woody Norris in the 1990s, using the tendency of air to shift the frequency of sound waves to produce audible sound from a beam of ultrasound. [3] The effect is inaudible outside the beam; in theory you could direct a spoken message to an individual in a crowd without being overheard by those around them. The technology is being developed by ATC who produce the LRAD (Long Range Acoustic Device) range of crowd-dispersal speakers for the US military and police.

Hypersonic sound requires line-of-sight operation and does not work through walls. So stepping inside would make the voices stop – but victims of gangstalking seem to suffer from voices whether they are indoors or out. Victims also believe they are being attacked by a variety of non-lethal electromagnetic weaponry with effects that including insomnia, bruising, "tiny little marks in my skin," paralysis, numbness and assorted pains in different parts of the body.

Again, the Pentagon has researched exotic electromagnetic beam weapons for nonlethal use. One 1990s concept was a microwave weapon which would produce an artificial fever by heating up the brain. However, this would require high levels of power and the effects would be too variable for it to be useful. Again, the idea does not seem to have been pursued. (Of course, we cannot say for sure; it's possible that research continued on a classified project after the known one was cancelled).

The weapon that has most captured the public imagination is the Active Denial System, an actual working non-lethal beam weapon that causes pain from a distance of hundreds of metres. [4] Intended mainly for crowd control, it looks like a large satellite dish mounted on a truck. The dish projects a beam of millimetre waves (short wavelength microwaves) that quickly heat up the target's skin. This creates a burning sensation so painful that no test subject has ever been able to withstand it for more than a few seconds. A 'repel effect', similar to the one that makes you reflexively pull your hand out of a fire, forces you to leap or scramble out of the two-metre beam. The pain ceases immediately.

The first Active Denial system was unveiled by the Pentagon in 2001; since then, it has gone through a number of versions, but the technology remains large, cumbersome and very expensive. The Gyrotron, the device that produces the beam, is based on superconducting magnets and relies on a cryogenic cooling system that takes several hours to reach operating temperature.

Political and public relations issues stopped Active Denial from being used in Iraq or Afghanistan. It looks a little too close to torture, and the use of ray guns on unarmed civilians could be a PR disaster. However, the Pentagon's Joint Nonlethal Weapons Directorate continues to fund development of smaller, cheaper systems which do not require supercooling, in the belief that it will one day be an effective nonlethal weapon capable of dispersing from a safe distance crowds throwing rocks or petrol bombs. The victims of gangstalking do not seem to report effects that match Active Denial. Again, they are often targeted indoors, but Active Denial radiation cannot penetrate walls.

There is every reason to be concerned about new types of weapon that can easily be abused. But the technology reported by many gangstalking victims does not exist, as far as we can tell. Yet.

NOTES

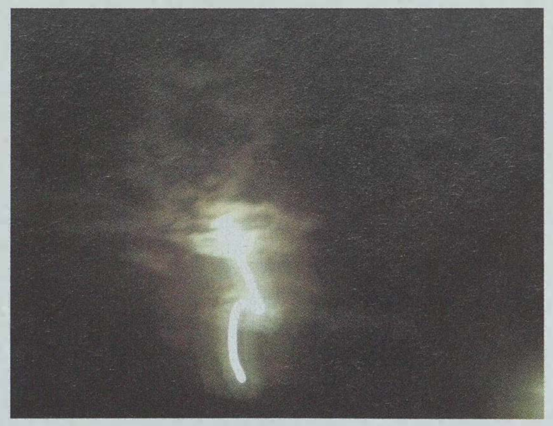
[1] www.newscientist.com/article/dn13513-us-army-toyed-with-telepathic-ray-gun.html#.Uej3SxVwa1I

[2] www.newscientist.com/article/dn14250-microwave-ray-gun-controls-crowds-withnoise.html

[3] www.atcsd.com/pdf/HSSdatasheet.pdf

[4] http://jnlwp.defense.gov/pressroom/adt.html

ABOVE: Mattole Valley, on northern California's Lost Coast. It was always full of marijuana farmers, now there were 1950s-stye UFOs and strange government agents.
RIGHT: This photo, taken by Dion Fuller in July 2012, allegedly reveals a UFO-like drone streaking off into the skies above Humboldt County.



DION FULLER

the local rednecks whipped out their rifles and began firing at the ominous craft. A rumour spread through the area that the farms would soon be raided by the FBI or some other government agency. One day, a local resident spotted two "agents" camped out on a nearby hillside; the "agents" appeared to be spying on the farmlands below with a pair of binoculars. (The sunlight glinting off the binoculars gave them away.) *En masse*, the local farmers ran up into the hills with their firearms, intent on blowing the intruders into bloody shards. The "agents," or whoever they were, scurried away like panicked vermin.

Later that night, the drone sightings in the valley grew even more intense. They were now so frequent that even Dion's mother (who had always been sceptical of his San Diego experiences) admitted she couldn't explain their presence in the skies above her modest little home.

As of today, these weird sightings are still occurring. The old pattern has started up again. Dion often wakes in the middle of the night feeling nauseous, a metallic taste in his mouth, hearing the sounds of invisible intruders lurking around outside – sometimes even *inside* – his trailer, located just behind his mother's house. His loyal dog Bruce often hears the sounds as well and skitters away in terror.

Perhaps the appearance of these drones in the area is merely coincidental. After all, the US government would naturally have an interest in keeping that part of the country under close scrutiny due to the amount of illegal substances grown there on a daily basis. But the reaction of the locals suggests otherwise. According to them, such bizarre activity has never occurred in the valley before. That is, not until Dion arrived.

It could be that whenever a "flagged" individual enters a zone of possible interest (like an anti-war rally or the marijuana capital of the world), the robot spies and the invisible dwarves are wound up like toy soldiers and frogmarched in for the purpose of monitoring said individual up-close and personal, just to see what the target's up to. But if the surveillance techniques of the US government are this omnipotent, how does *any* terrorist ever get away with committing a crime, no matter how large or small? How is it possible that thousands upon thousands of taxpayer dollars are being spent monitoring a harmless, 40-year-old freak who's living in his mother's back yard while *real* terrorists and miscreants are allowed to roam freely in and out of the United States at will?

It's crucial to point out that it's *not just Dion* experiencing this terrorism. It's happening to a lot of people – guinea pigs by government decree – all over the country. I've just completed an entire book about these bizarre experiments entitled *Chameleo*. If I can somehow find a publisher courageous enough to release this story, perhaps all the facts will soon be known about this perverse form of terrorism sweeping across the United States of America and beyond. FT

Some of the names in this article have been changed in order to protect the innocent from the guilty. Of course, the names of Richard Schowengerdt and Dr Lev Berger have not been altered.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ROBERT GUFFEY lectures in English at California State University, Long Beach. He is the awardwinning author of articles for a wide range of publications, including *FT*, and the book *Cryptoscatology: Conspiracy Theory as Art Form* (Trine Day, 2012).

THE ART OF THE WITCH

The image of the witch has long fascinated artists, and as a new exhibition takes in 500 years of crones and cauldrons, **BRIAN J ROBB** considers her enduring artistic spell.

Think of a witch and what images come to mind? Do you see an old crone, with a crooked nose, a pointy hat, dressed in black and standing by a steaming cauldron or flying by on a broomstick? Maybe there's a black cat lurking about her feet? Perhaps you can even hear screechy cackling on the wind…

It's a clichéd vision, one repeated over and over again in images of witches in film and television. Perhaps the quintessential portrayal comes from Margaret Hamilton in the holiday staple *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Not only does she have the attitude, the hat, and the broomstick, she's green to boot.

While that is the way witches are most often visualised in popular culture, there is another frequent depiction: the sexy young seductress. This version of the witch figure casts her spell to capture the hearts and minds of men, often for dubious ends. Either way, there arises the question of just what these images of witches say about women and society's attitudes to them through time.

WHICH WITCH IS WHICH?

The figure of the witch probably goes back to the origins of mankind, but really took widespread hold during the era of the Roman Empire. However, it wasn't until the late 16th and early 17th centuries that popular attitudes towards witchcraft and witches hardened, with persecution becoming prevalent. Within Christian theology there arose the idea that witches had made deliberate pacts with the Devil. Beyond that, there was the notion of conspiracy: that witches did not act alone or individually. They were often part of a group, described as a 'coven' (an idea of Scottish origin) and usually made up of 13 members. This was a mirroring of recognised Christian worship, with the coven being an anti-congregation of the Christian faith. It also led to the belief that if a village or a community was identified as having one witch within it, then there must be more that would need to be hunted down. In 1590, there was a trial of 300 witches in Scotland, with the women accused of treason as they were allegedly plotting the regicide of King James VI. The concept of the witch-hunt became formalised and regimented.

> WHAT DO THESE IMAGES SAY ABOUT WOMEN AND SOCIETY?

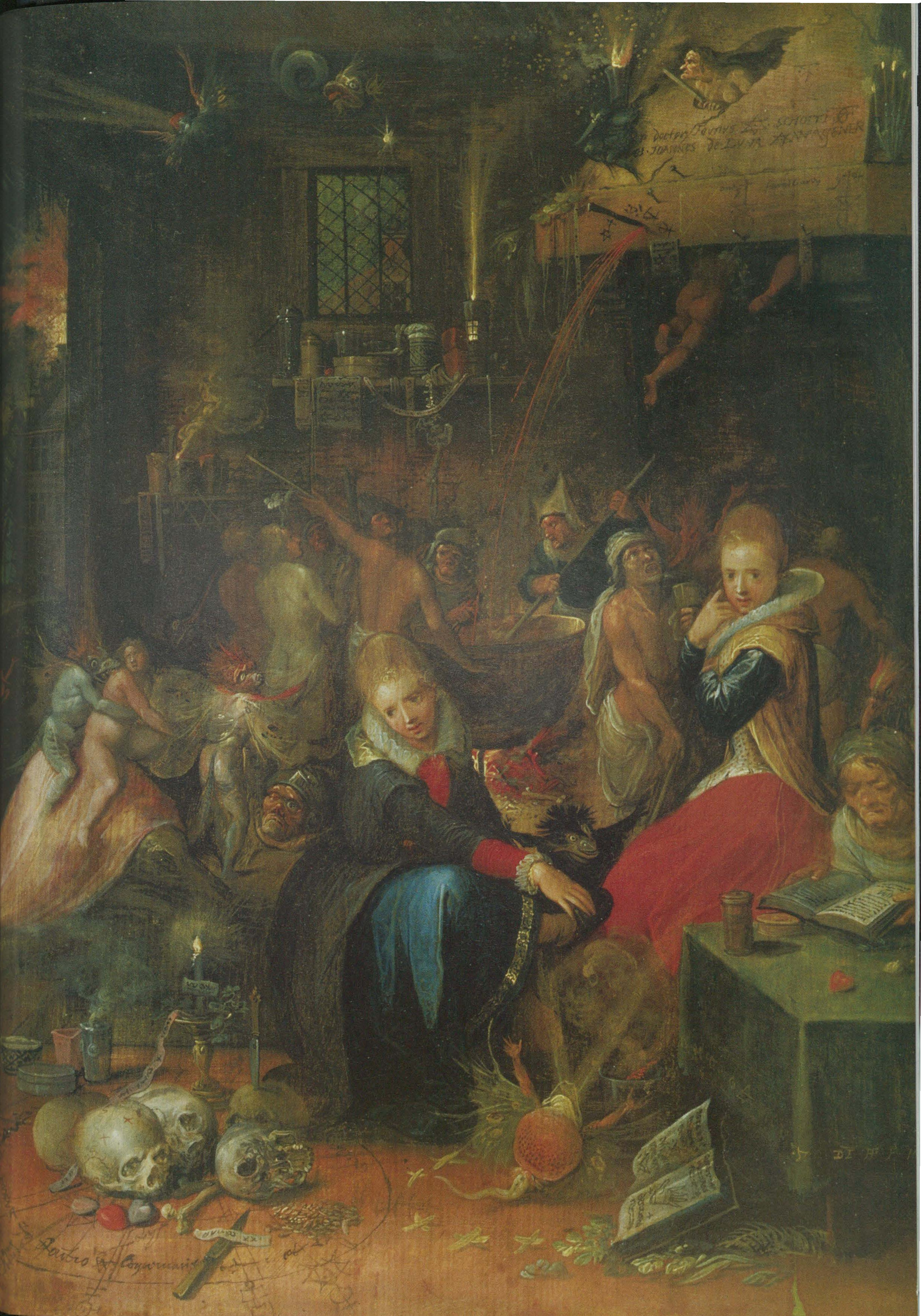
One of the most famous cases occurred just over 500 years ago in the area of Pendle Hill in Lancashire in 1612. Twelve women, half of whom came from just two families, were accused of 10 murders in the area through the use of witchcraft. Ten of their number were found guilty and executed. The proceedings were unusually well documented, but the modern view is that many of the disturbances arose through a feud between the Demdike and Chattox families. Despite this, the events of the Pendle witch trials and others like them came to dominate the image of the witch in the popular imagination. Even today, with widespread acceptance of paganism and the concept of the benign 'white witch', the impression that still predominates is that of the broomstick-riding hag – and much of this is down to how witches have been depicted in the fine art of the Renaissance and beyond.

THE ART OF WITCHCRAFT

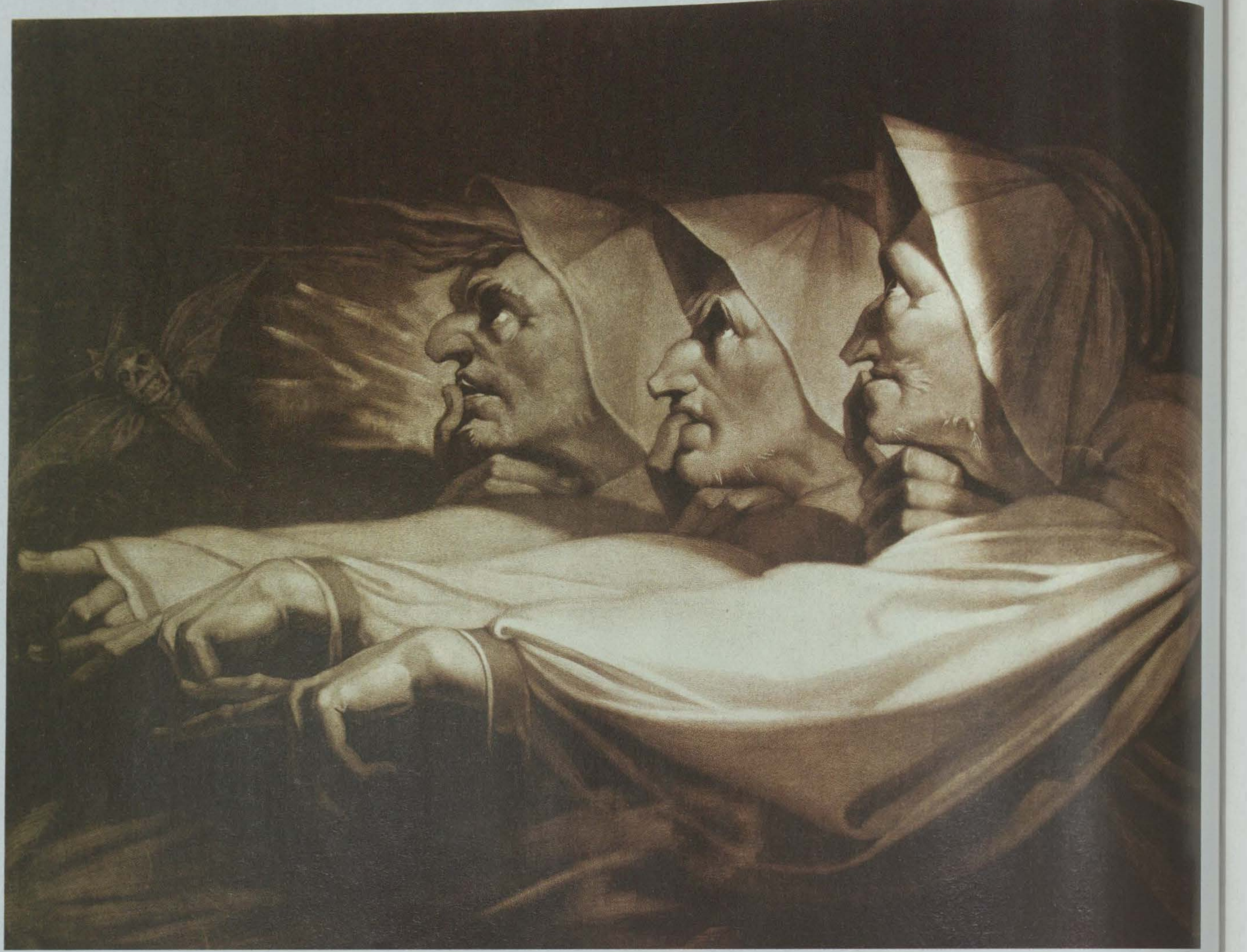
The history of the visual representation of witches in art is a long and varied one. From their pagan roots, female practitioners of magic have been variously celebrated, demonised, and romanticised. The word 'witch' derives from the Old English 'wicca' or 'wicce' and can be traced as far back as AD 890. Many of the concepts associated with it are essentially a creation of the Middle Ages, and their depiction in art was mainly supportive of the later persecutions. They were also figures familiar from storytelling, whether biblical ("Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live", Exodus 18:22) or mythological.

The 'weird sisters' of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* may be among the most famous of literary witches, but similar figures had appeared earlier in works by Mallory and Spenser. However, Shakespeare first codified the classic 'old crone' figure and the use of a cauldron is almost entirely down to *Macbeth*, according to Diane Purkiss, author of *The Witch in History*.

For audiences of the Jacobean period, the concept of the witch and the existence of witchcraft were all too real. The learned elite had written accounts of witchcraft that the literate could draw upon – including one from a royal source, with King James VI's *Dæmononlogie* – driving the intellectual debate and providing backing for witch hunts across



FRANS FRANCKEN II, WITCHES' SABBATH, 1606 © VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON



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ABOVE: 'The Weird Sisters from Shakespeare's Macbeth' after Henry Fuseli. **PREVIOUS PAGE:** 'Witches' Sabbath' by Frans Francken.

Europe. The 'Scottish Play' (as thespians refer to the supposedly cursed *Macbeth*) was written sometime between 1603 and 1607, with the earliest performance recorded as having taken place in April 1611 at the Globe Theatre, London, with publication following in 1623.

TRYING TIMES

These were turbulent times for those accused of witchcraft, with rising hysteria across Europe (and extending to the North American colonies) fuelled by the belief that worshippers of Satan were a threat to organised Christianity. Simultaneously, interest in the occult had increased during the Renaissance. Mythological creatures, including the likes of dragons and unicorns, were all the rage, and the first formal Tarot cards were entering widespread circulation. While much of this was tolerable to Christianity, the figure of the witch remained taboo.

WORSHIPPERS OF SATAN WERE A THREAT TO CHRISTIANITY

As well as a pre-emptive act to protect the dominant religious ideology of the time, witchcraft trials were also a way of keeping the poor (mainly women) in their place. In this context, art depicting witches and witchcraft fell into two broad camps: art as propaganda, following the dominant beliefs, and art as subversion, revealing the hidden 'truths' behind the persecution of women. The empowered woman was a figure of anxiety in ancient and historical Western culture – and to a large extent, still is. Long before Freud, the image of the witch was a locus for such fears and terrors. Artists approached this subject as both an excuse to unleash their imaginations (perhaps normally constrained by the usual landscapes and portraits of their society patrons) and an attempt to provoke audiences.

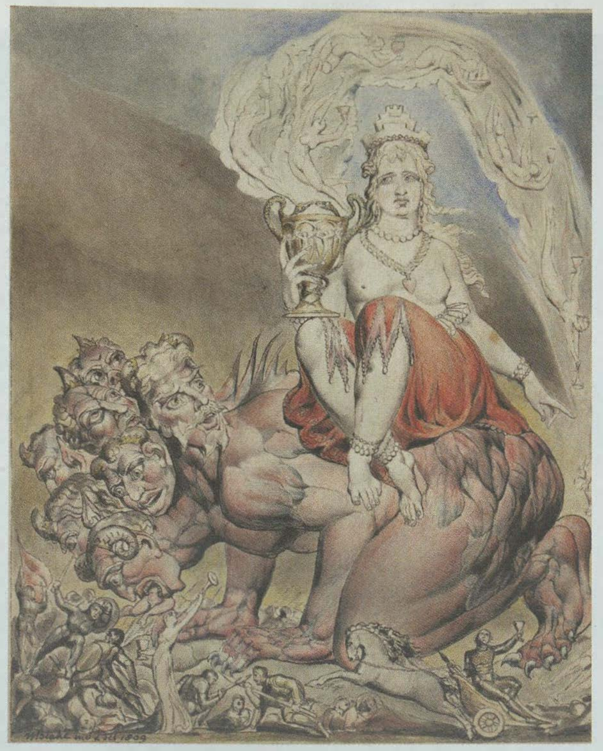
Lurking not far in the background of all this concern about witchcraft was another, probably more potent subject: sex. It scared those who held power in mediæval Europe, as it suggested private freedoms beyond their control. Magic and sex are often portrayed together. Artists, drawn to the nude human figure, could not resist the temptation to employ suggestions of dark magic alongside it.

By the 18th century, which saw the triumph of the Enlightenment and the rise of neo-classicism, the idea of real-life witches was largely dismissed (at least in polite society); painting on the subject tended to look backwards, treating historical subjects, although through an unrelentingly modern (and often self-censoring) filter. Later, some post-Romantic Victorian works romanticise the witch, turning her into an embodiment of the occult feminine, going some way to rehabilitating the dark figure of the old wise woman, isolated and alone due to her rejection by society.

The period from around 1860 through to the Great War saw much that was previously considered occult translated into the subjects and practices of artists of the era, but the rise of scientism and the looming shadow of modernism saw such subjects sidelined by the mid-20th century, and then superseded by the rise (and acceptance) of paganism, turning magic from evil 'black' to innocent 'white'.

It's in 20th century mass entertainment, rather than fine art, that the figure of the witch thrived. Movies of the 1940s and 1950s saw powerful women depicted as witches preying on weak men. Movies such as *I Married a Witch* (1942) and *Bell, Book and Candle* (1958) used the witch in reaction to the rise of women in the post-war workplace and their changing roles in society. These films often concluded by bringing the witch down a peg or two, usually making her fall in love with a mortal man and adapt herself and her desires to fit in with his – usually those condoned by the wider society. By the time of the hugely successful TV series *Bewitched* (1964-72) it is clear that Samantha (Elizabeth Montgomery) is the powerful one, although in keeping with the times, her witchcraft is depicted within a relentlessly domestic setting.

The domestic nature of 1950s and 1960s witchcraft was subverted by such movies as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *Suspiria* (1977), depicting powerful Satanic covens which seem to win the day. By the 1990s, popular paganism was seeping into media depictions of witchcraft, with the witch as hero in the figure of Willow in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and the trio of central characters in *Charmed* (1998-2006). Teen witch role models even appeared with *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003). It was left to horror movies like *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) to peddle the old 'witch-as-evil' trope. With a whole set of new witch-themed TV shows and movies on the horizon, organised paganism may need to brace itself for a new influx of witch-curious teens…



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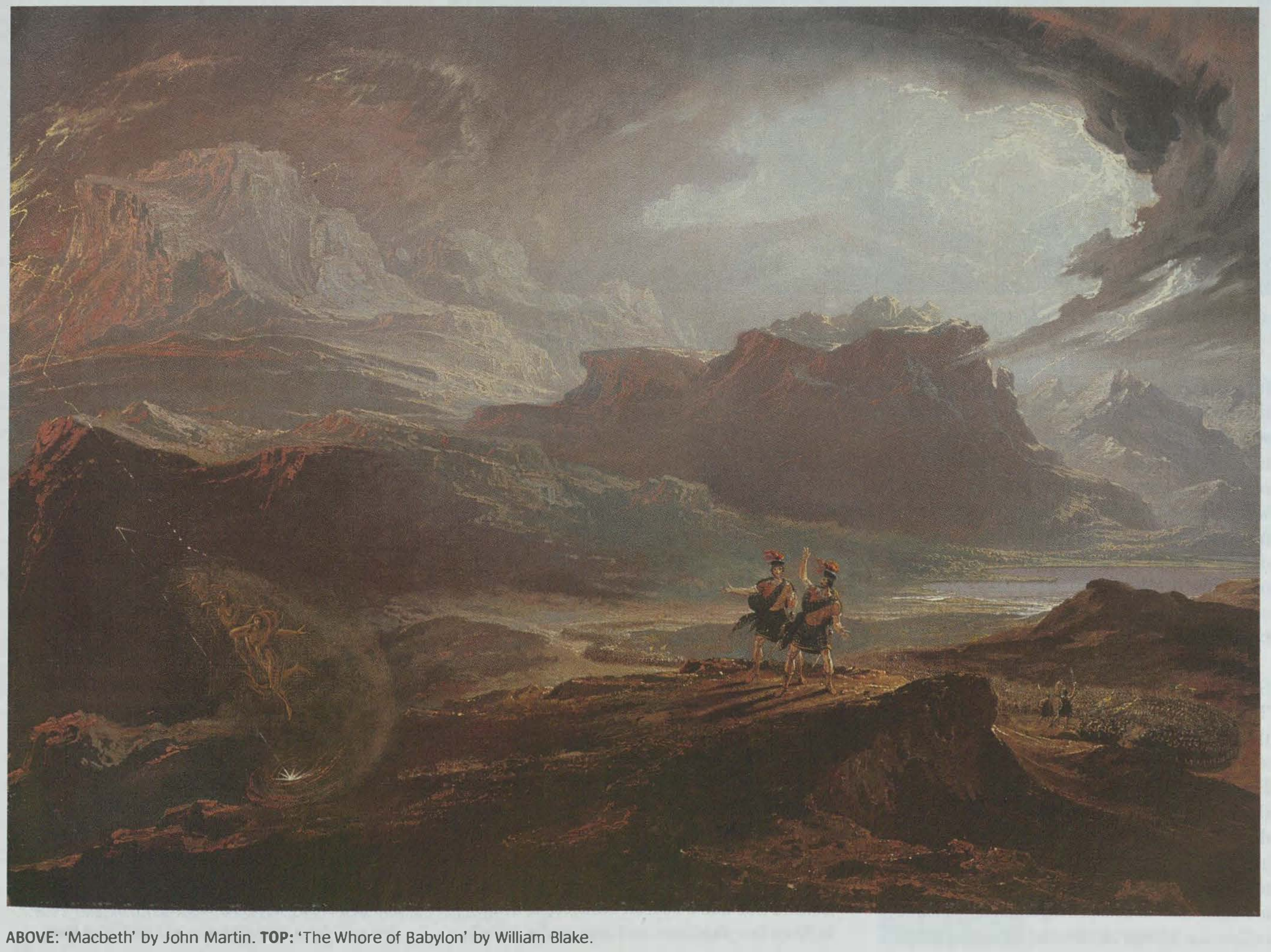
WITCHES AND WICKED BODIES

The overly familiar image of the witch as the old woman on a broomstick is just one of many interpretations that have found their way into art over the past 500 years. This is the fertile territory explored by the Scottish National Galleries exhibition 'Witches and Wicked Bodies'. From Albrecht Dürer's 1501 engraving of a cackling old crone, through works by Goya, Fuseli and William Blake to more up-to-date versions by the likes of Paula Rego and Kiki Smith, this is the first time a major art exhibition has been devoted to witchcraft through the ages. Prints and drawings from the period of the most active witch persecution are central to the exhibition, which has been arranged thematically rather than strictly chronologically.

One of the most famous paintings is Salvator Rosa's 'Witches at their Incantations', the centrepiece of the 'Witches' Sabbaths and Devilish Rituals' section. This dark (in more ways than one) painting from around 1646 is the most ambitious surviving example of his works concerning the occult painted during his decade in Florence during the 1640s. Illuminated in the centre of the picture are naked witches casting spells, while above them in the darkness there is a male figure hanging from a withered tree. The image includes some weird sights, from a ghostly figure on the far left through to a giant skeleton and a frog-like creature staring out at the viewer on the



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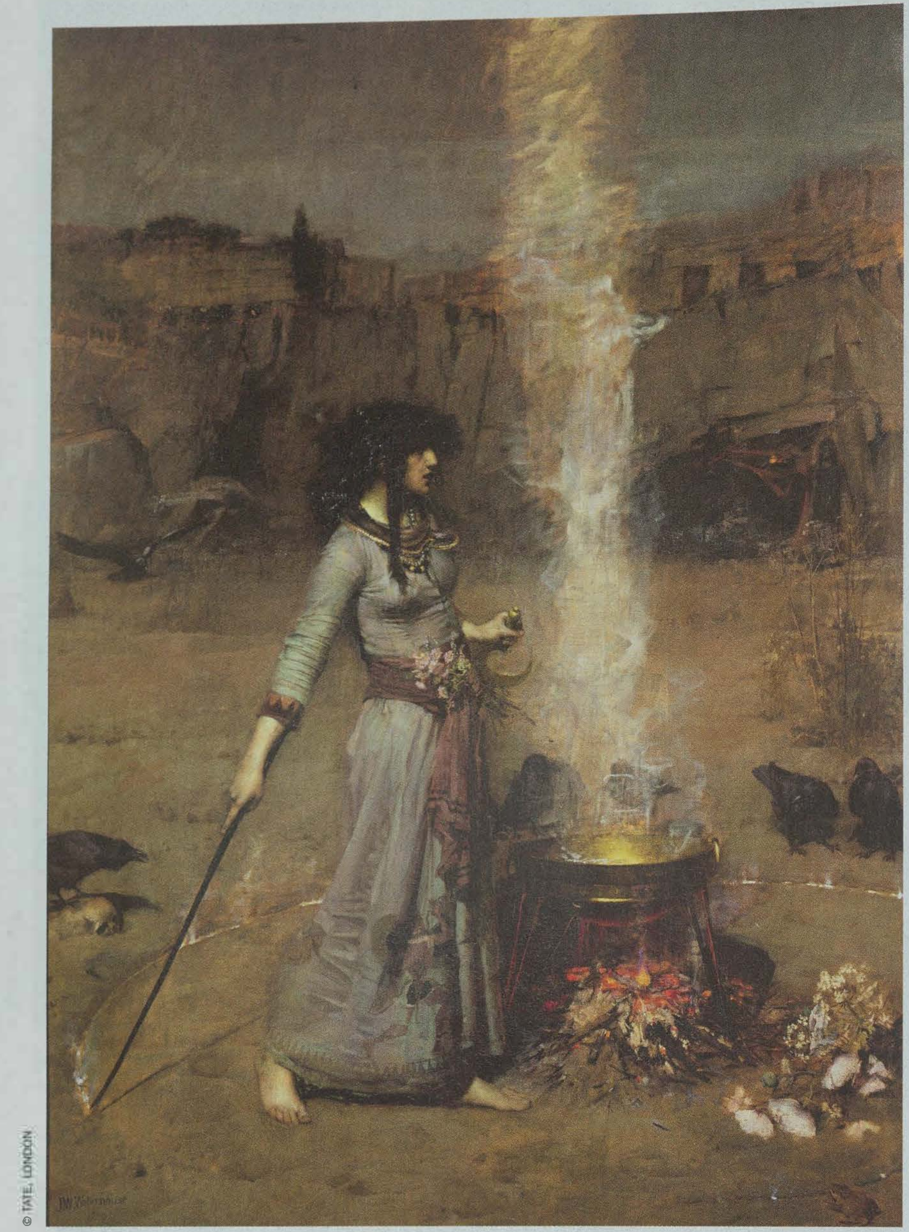
ABOVE: 'Macbeth' by John Martin. **TOP:** 'The Whore of Babylon' by William Blake.



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ABOVE: 'The Magic Circle' by John William Waterhouse.

far right. The nocturnal landscape reflects the irrational psychology of witchcraft, something Rosa himself was keenly interested in (it was the subject of many of his poems and etchings). While Rosa's witches are earthbound, busy with their incantations, those featured in the section of the exhibition entitled 'Unnatural Acts of Flying' are far more active and reveal some of the origins of the old-woman-on-a-broomstick figure.

Frans Francken's 1606 painting 'Witches' Sabbath' is featured in the positively spooky 'Magic Circles, Incantations and Raising the Dead' part of the exhibition. Typical of a series of witchcraft-themed paintings by Francken, 'Witches' Sabbath' encapsulates the beauty and horror of the witch figure, displaying both the crone archetype and the alternative younger version – although they are sometimes seen as multiple aspects of a single individual. The figures sit beside a collection of four skulls, candles, coloured stones and a knife, while in the background there appears to be demonic activity afoot, including the stirring of a giant cauldron.

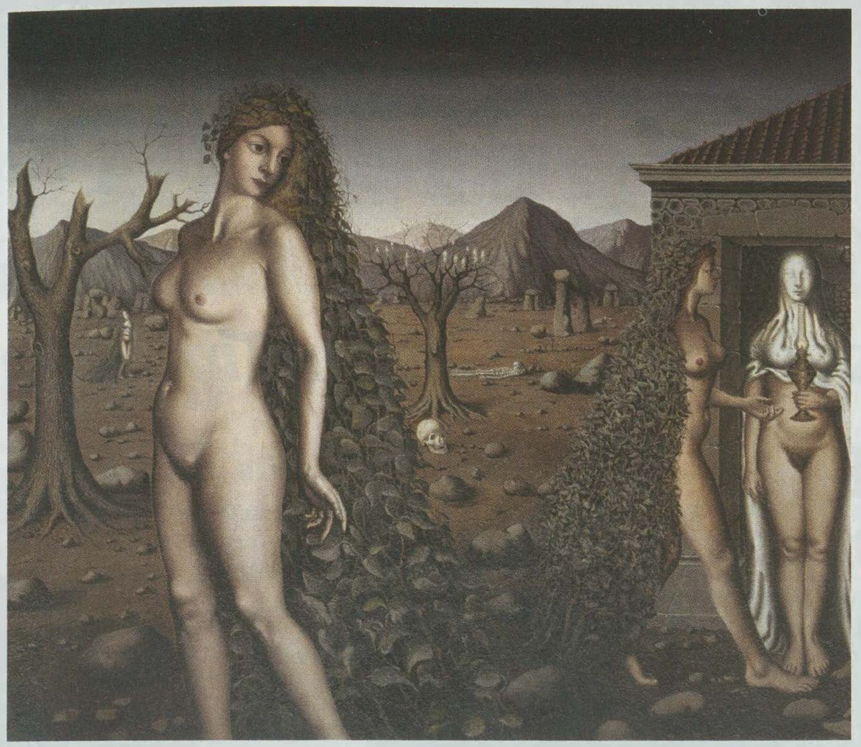
A single figure is the focus of John William Waterhouse's 1886 painting 'The Magic Circle', also featured in this section. Waterhouse drew on a variety of sources and his own interests in constructing his image of a witch, giving her a middle-eastern complexion, an early Anglo-Saxon hairstyle and a dress decorated with images of Persian or Greek warriors. This magpie-like approach continues through to the sickle-shaped knife she wields in her left hand (connected to the Moon and Hecate), while the long wand in her right hand draws a (perhaps protective) circle around her in the dirt. She is within the circle, sharing the space with flowers (associated with beauty), while outside it lurk images of evil in the animalistic shape of rooks, ravens and a frog. Behind her lies a barren landscape, while in front is a shallow cauldron, under which a fire blazes. Barefoot and loose-limbed, the image is one of relaxed yet powerful femininity.

Inevitably, any exhibition built around images of witches will feature several works from Spanish artist Francisco de Goya, the doyen of 'old crone' painters. His work is central to the 'Hideous Hags and Beautiful Witches' section. Goya painted a series of works on the subject of witchcraft, all of which were at one time owned by Spanish aristocrat the Duchess of Osuna, a well-known patron of the arts (and who may have even commissioned the paintings, as she did several family portraits by Goya). His 1798 'Witches' Sabbath' depicts the Devil in the form of a garlanded goat, surrounded by a mix of old and young witches. An old witch holds an infant in her arms, although whether the child is a sacrifice or is simply there for a satanic blessing is not clear. There are two infant skeletons shown elsewhere in the picture, so one fears the worst.

Another Goya work is usually known by a variation of the same popular title – 'Witches' Sabbath, or The Great He-Goat' (it's actually from an untitled fresco of 1821–23). It's one of his works known as the 'black paintings', expressing the mature artist's bleak outlook on humanity. It again shows Satan in goat form, but in silhouette. The witches, depicted in a large crowd, are uniformly of the 'old crone' variety, except for one young girl on the right. This coven is in awe of the Devil, who imposes his authority through fear and domination – widely interpreted as an expression of Goya's own view of the Church and monarchy in Spain, and of his dismissal of the superstitious beliefs of the peasant class.

A third Goya painting –'Witches' Flight' from 1797-98 – shows three figures (partially naked male warlocks) with magnificent pointed headgear floating in the air, lifting a fourth prone figure between them. Two of the warlocks appear to be biting the man they're holding. Below them on the ground is another figure, whose head is covered by a white sheet and who holds his arms out with his thumbs in his clenched fingers, a gesture of *figo* intended to ward off evil. He is followed by a donkey on the right, while to the far left, there is another prone figure on the ground, clutching his head in his hands.

An exhibition on this subject could hardly ignore William Blake, with both his 'Whore of Babylon' and a drawing thought to depict Hecate, the witch of the crossroads, included. His 1809 'Whore of Babylon' features the figure of a topless witch sitting upon a multi-limbed, multi-headed figure, holding a grail chalice from which seems to flow a variety of human spirits. The creature upon which she's perched appears to be eating the smaller figures littering the landscape below. Blake was, of course, referring back to the Book of Revelation. Co-curator Patricia Allerston has noted that "the Blake drawings are very fragile so they are generally kept off display, which means this will be a rare chance to see these two drawings together."



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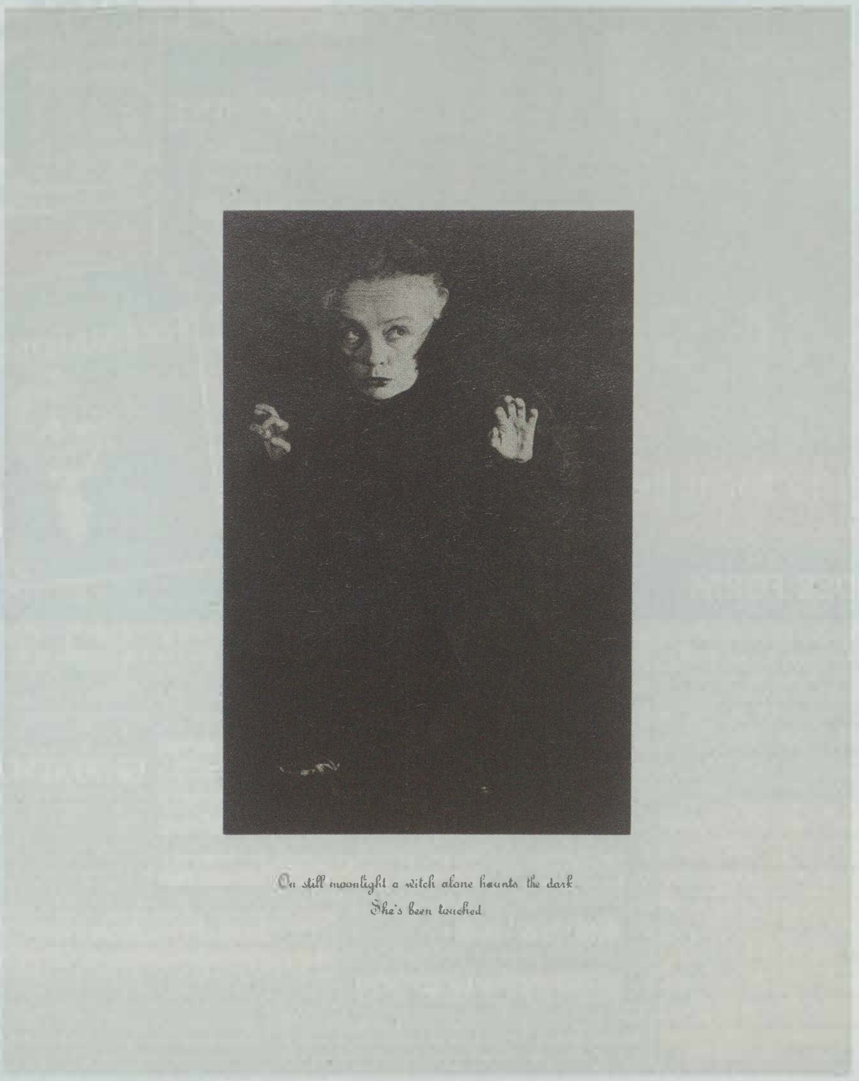
On still moonlight a witch alone haunts the dark
She's been touched

ABOVE: From 'Out of the Woods, Untitled (Encryption) 1:5' by Kiki Smith.
TOP: 'L'Appel de la Nuit' [The Call of the Night] by Paul Delvaux.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* provides the basis for 'Unholy Trinities and The Weird Sisters', a section that collects works inspired by the Bard's musings on witchcraft, including John Martin's painting of Banquo and Macbeth which stages its tableau on a theatrical scale. Once again, a blasted landscape is central to the world inhabited by witches, with turbulent skies reigning over exaggerated mountain ranges. In a similar vein is John Runciman's drawing of Shakespeare's three witches considering Macbeth's fate.

Things get more up-to-date with 'The Persistence of Witches', gathering together some 20th century works that look back through a modern sensibility to the time when witches ruled the skies. The biggest difference is that these modern artists are female. Works by Kiki Smith and Paula Rego provide a markedly contemporary take on visions that had previously been a male preserve. Through her study 'Out of the Woods', Smith attempts an exploration of the historical depictions and queries the attitudes of artists to the figure of the witch, as well as the seeming attitudes of the witches depicted.

Paula Rego's featured work directly relates to the anniversary of the Pendle witches. It's an etching from 1996 titled 'Straw Burning', one of a series of 12 works under the collective title of 'Pendle Witches'. Rego's stark black-and-white, almost 'graphic novel' approach to the subject captures each of her isolated figures in a moment, whether of contemplation, ecstasy or fear.

Closing the exhibition with these works is not only a way of showing that the variety and tradition of the depiction of witches in art continues right up to today, but also makes the point that previously such paintings were a response to unacknowledged female power. Those women who asserted themselves, or provided services to the community through applying their knowledge of nature (using herbs and leaves in medicine, for example, or aiding in childbirth), were often branded as 'witches' simply as a signifier of their otherness and as a way of returning them to the control of the patriarchy. The male domination of European society allowed for the depiction of a certain class of women as dangerous, supernatural creatures who threatened the 'natural' order. Closing the exhibition with a female take on the subject offers an apt, revisionist take on a perennial subject of occult art. FT

'Witches and Wicked Bodies' runs at The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh until 3 November 2013.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

BRIAN J ROBB is a bestselling biographer and the author of books on silent cinema, Phlip K Dick, Wes Craven and Laurel and Hardy. He is co-editor of the Sci-Fi Bulletin website and lives in Edinburgh.

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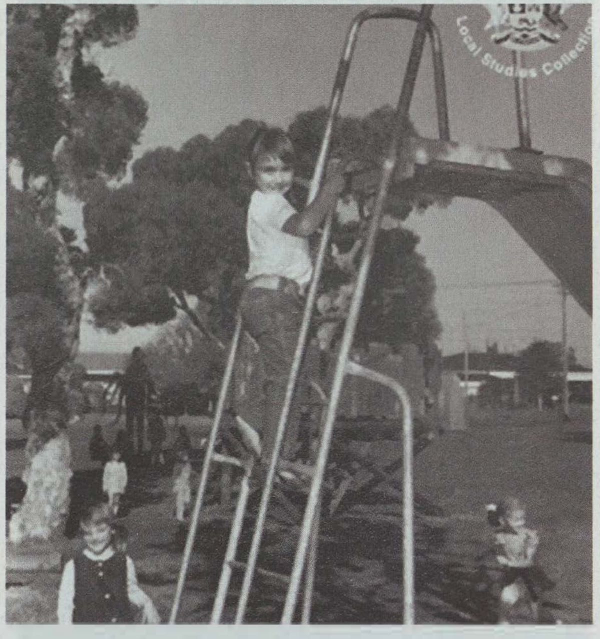
forum

Shadow of the Slenderman

Long, tall and creepy, Slenderman is a 21st century open-source monster, an evolving digital meme, travelling along the Internet highway, making record time and becoming nearly real. **SHARON HILL** investigates...

SHARON HILL is an advocate for science and scepticism but loves monsters. She is the owner of Doubtfulnews.com Contact her at flavors.me/idoubtit



(The) Slenderman was born from a photo-editing contest on the Something Awful web forums in 2009 when 'Victor Surge' submitted two images for community evaluation. The spooky portraits were of groups of children. But in the background was a tall, thin, faceless entity in a black suit – his arms like tentacles, his head smooth and pale. Within five days, there existed a narrative of death and bad luck to go with the photos. After 10 days, Slendy was a character in the YouTube series 'Marble Hornets'.

Ian 'Cat' Vincent has researched the birth and evolution of Slenderman, and highlights the importance of Slendy as "the first open source monster." Previous pop culture monsters were creations of an individual or a group of professional writers. "Slenderman came from a shared forum of mostly anonymous creators, with no profit motive in sight," Vincent says. "That's a precedent."

Slendy currently stars in an array of videos, YouTube series, alternate reality games (ARGs), fan art, online horror stories and parodies (try 'Trenderman', a hip clothes horse; or Splendorman, a happy clown with a painted-on face).

According to Benjamin Radford, author of *Tracking the Chupacabra*, Slenderman draws from mythology and folklore with motifs shared across the world. "The idea of a tall, thin, generally silent but menacing stranger in a prim suit is iconic," Radford comments. Children are commonly victims of the bogeyman; Slendy seems to be captivated by them as well.

"Slenderman is like a Rorschach blot, and because he's so mysterious and unknown, he's a versatile character for just about any plot, from Men-In-Black-menacing to 'Tall Man' or La Llorona-type child kidnapping and killing... There's even some connection to the Phantom Clowns that were said to menace children" (see **FT38:46–48, 226:34–41**).

Professor J Scott Poole, author of *Monsters in America*, observed that online forums buzz with speculation about "Slendy's earlier incarnations... connecting him with the Wendigo of Native American myth. In essence, we see true believers trying to give their monster a history... He owes much to Nosferatu and Freddy Krueger. Both cross between the land of nightmare and reality, looming forms in the distance. We also see in Slenderman the slimy, squishy elements of Lovecraftian horror and cautionary tales about those delving into his mysteries being driven mad."

Slenderman is an evolving meme. Descriptions of his appearance and behaviour vary depending on the aspect needing emphasis. According to the Slender Wiki, Slendy has morphed into many types of character. This makes it difficult for him to be a *tulpa* or collective thoughtform, one popular explanation for Slenderman's existence. Since we are clearly not thinking of him as a unified thing, how could he be sustained? Tulpas have been used to explain many different monsters and strange creatures that people say they've seen but shouldn't or couldn't have seen according to the laws of nature. An alternative explanation often given for Slenderman is quantum physics – that he is probability itself, a collection of particles that acts as one particle. This explains how he teleports instantaneously. He is never in a fixed position until the quantum state collapses and you observe him, then... you're dead. Nifty.

Slenderman is part of a new haunted digital space, notes Professor Poole. "I think his creation on the Internet actually helps explain his power. I suspect we will be meeting more of our monsters on the digital frontier." We don't yet know how this new technology will affect our monster-making.

Arguably, the first Internet monster was the chupacabra. Radford, who wrote the definitive chronicle of this creature, says: "The chupacabra originated in Puerto Rico, from a woman who confused real-life with a science fiction monster in 1995. It would likely have ended there, except that the report and description was soon broadcast on television and seen around the world via the Internet" (see **FT271:30–35**)

As with the chupacabra, we can give Slenderman's first appearance a known date. But there are accounts by people claiming to have seen or encountered both creatures decades ago – even in old photographs. Now that Slendy is part of the culture, believing is seeing.

So how can we kill him, I ask Ian Vincent? It's like saying: "Don't think of a white elephant!" It's impossible to make him *unexist*. Vincent notes the possibility of using occult practices – "banishing rituals, summoning something nastier than Slendy to fight him on my behalf, or using elements of his own mythos against him." Someone is undoubtedly working on that.

Poole makes a more down-to-earth observation: "Monsters inevitably end up as commodities". The Slenderman legend has expanded into all media, and his main moneymaking job these days is appearing in alternate reality games. has become real, because memes are real."

His mythos will surely grow... like his spindly, noodly appendages. FT

The Coming of the Ultraterrestrials

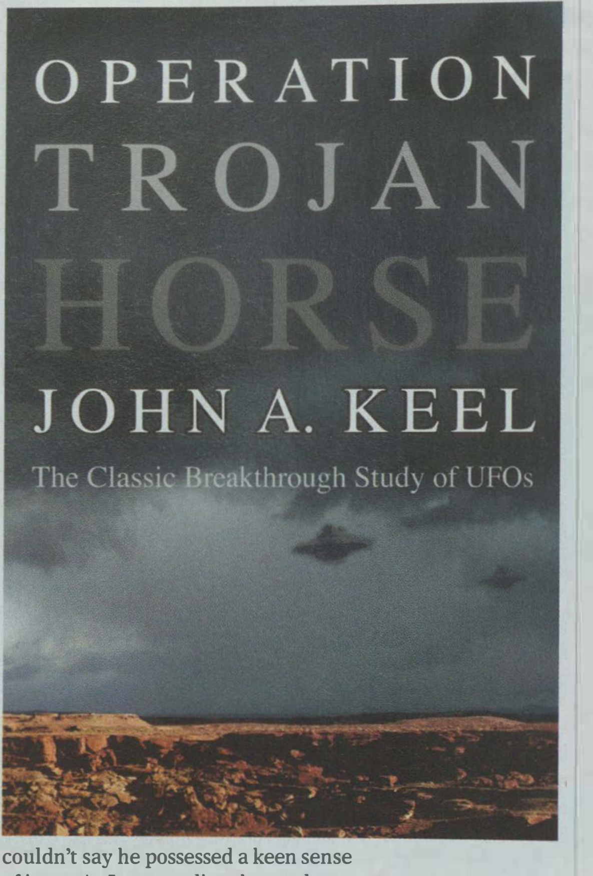
With the republication of John Keel's *Operation Trojan Horse* and *Jadoo*, **JEROME CLARK** thinks it's time to reassess Keel's legacy. Was he really a fortean visionary who helped us go beyond the limits of the extraterrestrial hypothesis, or just the ufological equivalent of Glenn Beck?

JEROME CLARK is, among other things, a chronicler of ufology's social history. His books include the multi-volume *The UFO Encyclopedia* (1990–1998).

It's April 1977, we're in a car driving across New Mexico, and John Keel is shouting in my face. His demeanor has changed from calm and cordial to red-faced and apoplectic in the space of time it has taken me to express polite scepticism about his just-stated conviction that Loch Ness houses a demonic entity. The rhetorical assault escalates into the personal – an enumeration of my many shortcomings, intellectual, emotional, and biographical. The car stops, Keel storms out, and the third occupant of the vehicle, a professor of theology at a California university, observes mildly: "You have a sick friend, Jerry."

For my part, I resisted – and resist even today – the temptation to diagnose the mental condition of Keel, whom I met in the late 1960s, even though a remarkable share of his published output was devoted to doing precisely that to others – in nearly all cases, individuals who took issue with him about one thing or another. In later years, and in my own case, he would spread the story that I have spent my adult life in and out of mental institutions, an allegation to which he adhered even after I called him on it, at which juncture he insisted – creepily, I thought – that he knew far more about my personal life than I could ever imagine. This knowledge did not encompass such basic, inconvenient facts as marriage and children, not to mention a long, publicly visible employment as a *Fate* editor, though it did imply that I wrote and researched 20-something books while under psychiatric confinement.

Let's just say Keel, who died in 2009 (see **FT253:38–42**), was strange. His company could be fun, too, and it could also be funny, so long as you allowed no voicing of contrary opinion to interrupt the nodding and the laughing. You couldn't say he possessed a keen sense of irony. As I was reading the newly reissued *Operation Trojan Horse* (*OTH*, originally published in 1970), my eyes fell upon Keel's account (p245) of an informant who regularly interacted with ultraterrestrials (ultraterrestrials being Keel's name for the demonic tricksters Who Are Behind It All, "It All" being a whole lot more than you might think). She observed that they "get very angry when you contradict them". Was Keel an ultraterrestrial?



Well, he certainly thought that other ostensible humans could be. The Three Wise Men, for example. Alleged airship inventors cited in turn-of-the-last-century American newspapers. The stranger who is said by Keel to have handed Thomas Jefferson the Great Seal of the United States (mysteriously absent, though, from the standard Jefferson biographies). Somebody who once spoke with Napoleon. Some guys in US Air Force uniforms. Telephone callers with weird names.

Keel's loathing of ufologists is a thing of wonder in itself, so all-encompassing that coherence and consistency collapse quickly by the wayside. In *OTH*, they're slammed for not taking contactees seriously, then trashed for doing the opposite. Ufologists are – of course – mentally unbalanced; they are also obsessives/cultists/egomaniacs/losers who reject the self-evident truths of occultism and then, after Keel has managed to catch his breath, get bashed for *being* occultists.

When, however, they offer up ideas useful to Keel, their resumés instantly inflate. Ancient-astronaut theorist W Raymond Drake, an occultist, becomes "historian WR Drake." Morris Jessup did some graduate work in astronomy before abandoning the discipline to work at a series of modest, prosaic jobs; many years later, he wrote books promoting the curious notion that an advanced terrestrial pygmy race, currently resident on the Moon, built and pilots flying saucers. To Keel this is the judgment of the "well-known astrophysicist MK Jessup." Contactee-influenced ruminator Bryant Reeve, co-author with his wife Helen of the slack-jawed New Age epic *Flying Saucer Pilgrimage* (1957), is transformed into a profound philosopher. The eccentric theorist Meade Layne, an early proponent of psychic channelling of aliens and ancient discarnates, is "brilliant". And it goes on.

You may think you've been around and heard it all. If you haven't read Keel, though, you wouldn't know that mere possession of a book (a copy of Jessup's *Case for the UFO* marked up by the emotionally confused drifter Carl Allen, aka "Carlos Allende") will set your house inexplicably ablaze, as happened, Keel attests, to one Iowa ufologist. Even worse, if you pay attention to UFO reports, you risk going clinically mad. Veteran grifter Reinhold Schmidt, who ended up in prison for a fraudulent investment scheme related to his claimed contacts with German speakers from Saturn, is ranked among the "sober and baffled witnesses". He is one of a number of known or suspected hoaxers suddenly to become truth-tellers. According to *OTH*, cultist-ufologists rejected their testimony for no other reason than that it was inconsistent with the extraterrestrial hypothesis, which Keel treats as the heresy of all heresies.

In the ETH's place, Keel substitutes mystification and meteors (the latter unwittingly). He champions sightings of allegedly enigmatic objects that any marginally informed reader will know to be common atmospheric phenomena; the meteors associated with the 16 August 1966 Perseid shower are depicted early in *OTH*'s pages as a massive ultraterrestrial infestation. Keel contends that these are, moreover, indicative of "the work of someone who is using our maps and our calendars and may, therefore, know a great deal about us, even though we know little about 'them'." All ostensible UFOs, along with all other anomalous and paranormal phenomena, are the consequence of a process Keel calls "transmogrification," which he eventually (p207) gets around to defining, sort of, as "seemingly material apparitions that might actually be composed of energies from the electromagnetic spectrum." Occultists have traditionally cloaked their ideas in pseudoscientific bafflegab. Keel is a traditionalist.

Underneath it all, and not far underneath either, is a premise that may be summed up thus: UFOs are magical, and the magicians are black. It is a shaky proposition in its most generous characterisation, and Keel does not exactly argue it compellingly. He employs a rhetorical strategy that American readers will recognise, *sans* the right-wing politics, from that employed by the mouth-breathing likes of Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck: express outrageous, dubiously factual assertions, then cap them with the demonisation of all potential dissenters. Fittingly, Keel manages to demonise both the UFO phenomenon (in this case, in a literal sense) and those who study it (in a metaphorical one).

I fell under Keel's spell in the late 1960s and early 1970s, so much so that Keel confided I would be his designated successor. (Not one to let a good grudge go to waste, Keel never forgave me for my subsequent apostasy.) Even today, I remember what the appeal was. Keel offered certainty when fortean data seemed to offer nothing but the ambiguity that so tries the patience of the young. He put forth what seemed then to be fresh and novel ideas, though later, while conducting research for my *UFO Encyclopedia* volumes, I discovered that he'd stolen them lock, stock, and barrel from the 1950s writings of Trevor James Constable, who goes unmentioned in *OTH*. I was poorly read then, painfully naïve, inclined to paranoia, and susceptible to broad and sweeping pronouncements about history; and I don't mean just the history of UFOs and anomalies, which Keel gets wrong, too.

ABOVE: The young John Keel way out East, from the pages of the original edition of *Jadoo*.

Keel's loathing of ufologists is a thing of wonder in itself...

A good part of the reason Keel immediately enchanted some (an international network – I will not call it a "cult" – of Keelists was not long in forming) has a simple explanation familiar to those versed in ufology's early history. (It needs to be said, incidentally, that the subculture is populated not by demented egomaniacs but by demonstrably normal, un-colourful hobbyists neither more nor less insane and self-obsessed than coin collectors or amateur astronomers.) The early years of ufology, whose immediate inspiration was not, as a persistent mythology has it, Ray Palmer's lurid SF magazines but Fort's works and the Fortean Society, were defined by the anticipation that flying saucers would be identified in relatively short order. Nothing like that happened, and when respectable society ended up shunning UFOs, disappointment and frustration set in among activist UFO followers.

As ordinarily happens when a movement doesn't achieve what it intended to accomplish, a witch-hunt for those responsible commences. Naturally, the witches are to be detected within one's own ranks. To many, ufology could have failed only because ufologists were unworthy. In truth, ufologists were marginalised and powerless from the outset, and UFOs fell short of respectability because of other, larger social forces. But if your life is wrapped up in ufology (or any other single-minded pursuit), you're getting a narrow, provincial view, and you are likely to think you are bigger than you are. You think you're having an impact on the world, for good or ill, when in dreary reality practically nobody knows you're there.

To Keel and those who believed him, ufology failed because ufologists are stunted people temperamentally unable to comprehend the sinister, manipulative, supernatural character of the phenomenon. Keel also voiced this view at near-deafening rhetorical volume, wowing the impressionable and intimidating some who should have been able to mount the needed rejoinders and corrections. Ufologists and forteans, to start with, ought to have been able to recognise Keel as something other than the new Charles Fort; disappointingly, he was only the new Tiffany Thayer.

OTH is hardly a serious book, or even a particularly entertaining one, but for students of the social history of anomalies and the paranormal, it has an undeniable significance. It had an impact which still echoes, as I know from personal experience as occasional recipient of thundering communications from the remaining faithful. The new edition, which I welcome, albeit with inevitably mixed feelings, will likely perpetuate it for a while longer.

Also newly reissued is *Jadoo*, Keel's first book, published in 1957. I had heard of it before, of course, but had not read it till now. It's not much like Keel's later books, though the yeti does make an appearance toward the end. Mostly, it concerns his travels through Egypt, Iraq, India and elsewhere in search of native magicians and holy men. It should be more interesting than it is. Keel was financing his travels by selling articles to (no longer extant) men's adventure magazines. *Jadoo*, assembled from those, exposes Keel's essential hackery. The prose is pedestrian, and the author's understanding of the culture is tissue-thin. Come to think of it, you could say as much of *Operation Trojan Horse*. FT

Operation Trojan Horse and *Jadoo* are both republished by Anomalist Books (www.anomalistbooks.com) at $15.95.

In Search of Peter Costello

LOREN COLEMAN wondered what happened to the author of two cryptozoological classics of the 1970s – and finally found him in Dublin

LOREN COLEMAN is Director of the International Cryptozoology Museum and the author of *Cryptozoology A to Z, Monsters of Massachusetts* and other books.

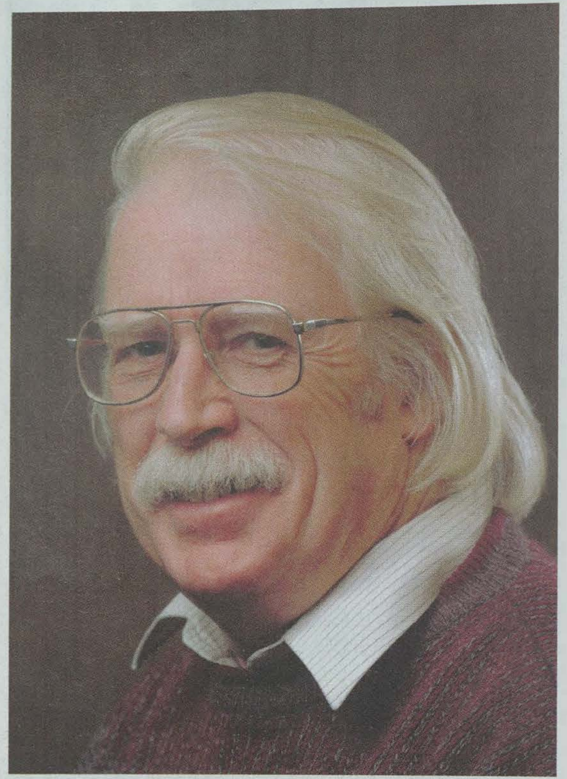
Growing up in the 1960s, I encountered something of a wasteland in terms of good books on cryptozoology. Oh sure, there was *On the Track of Unknown Animals* (1958) by Bernard Heuvelmans and *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life* (1961) by Ivan T Sanderson. But beyond that it was difficult to find a worthwhile work on any specific cryptid or group of cryptids. Things changed in the early 1970s, when some notable books on cryptozoology appeared. Unfortunately, the gems that did appear were largely overwhelmed by a flood of low-quality paperback throwaways at the end of that decade; but let us not dwell on that sad fact.

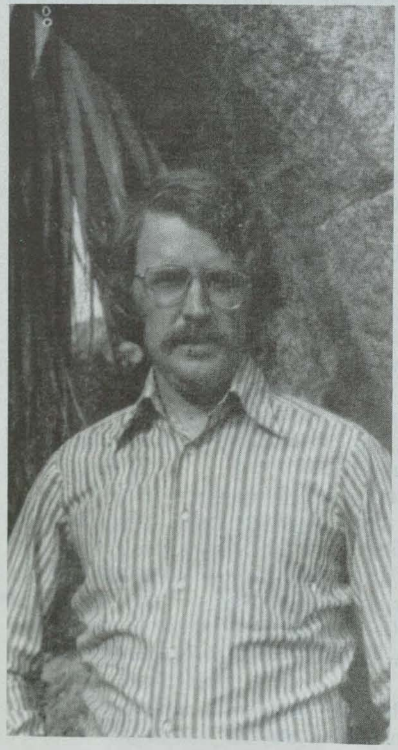
One of the best of the best, a comprehensive book on one facet of cryptozoology, appeared in 1974. Peter Costello's *In Search of Lake Monsters*, while concentrating on the Loch Ness Monster, was also global in its scope, deep in its insights, and unorthodox in its conclusions. Unlike many forays into lake monster discussion, Costello looked at the data in-depth and came away with a mind open to the notion that these creatures – covered in hair, whiskered, maned and swimming up and down – might be unknown mammals of some form. This was a radical idea at the time.

I read and thoroughly enjoyed *In Search of Lake Monsters*, as well as Costello's indirect follow-up that appeared in 1979, *The Magic Zoo: The Natural History of Fabulous Animals, Including Dragons, Mermaids, Unicorns and Centaurs*. But then Peter Costello seemingly disappeared. Not another cryptozoology title was forthcoming; he had become a mysterious figure in a field devoted to mysteries. Where – indeed who – was Peter Costello? Was the name real? Was he using an alias? Had a sea serpent devoured him during reported research for his next book on marine monsters? The rumours were many, and the facts were few and far between.

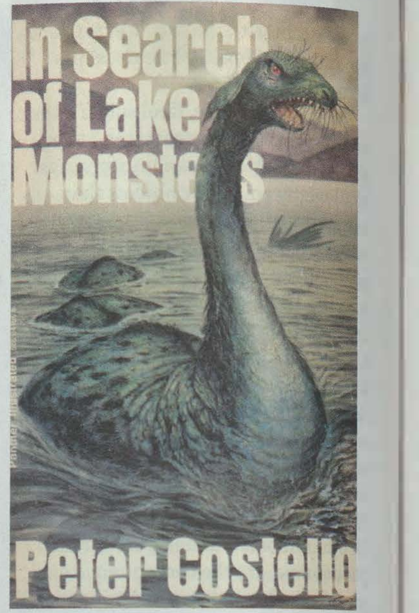
One of the missions of the International Cryptozoology Museum – of which I am Director – is to preserve the history of the field. With the rapid disappearance of so many writers and researchers from the 1960s and 1970s, I wondered, again: whatever happened to Peter Costello?

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETER COSTELLO





ABOVE AND LEFT: Peter Costello today, and in 1976, two years after the publication of *In Search of Lake Monsters*.



I decided to track him down, and with the help of fortean colleagues, I was able to locate him in what seemed the unlikeliest of places – a Roman Catholic newspaper.

This is the discussion we had.

Loren: Thank you, Peter, for agreeing to enlighten the readers of *Fortean Times* with some background information about yourself. First, some of the biographies are very confusing about where you grew up and lived. Could you give us a more accurate overview?

Peter: I was born in Dublin on 3 April 1945. I was educated there, at Gonzaga College SJ, a secondary school. We moved to Michigan because by father took an appointment there as a professor of architecture. I went to live in London in 1970 and travelled around a bit, and it was in London that I began publishing.

Loren: What the background to the *In Search of Lake Monsters* book?

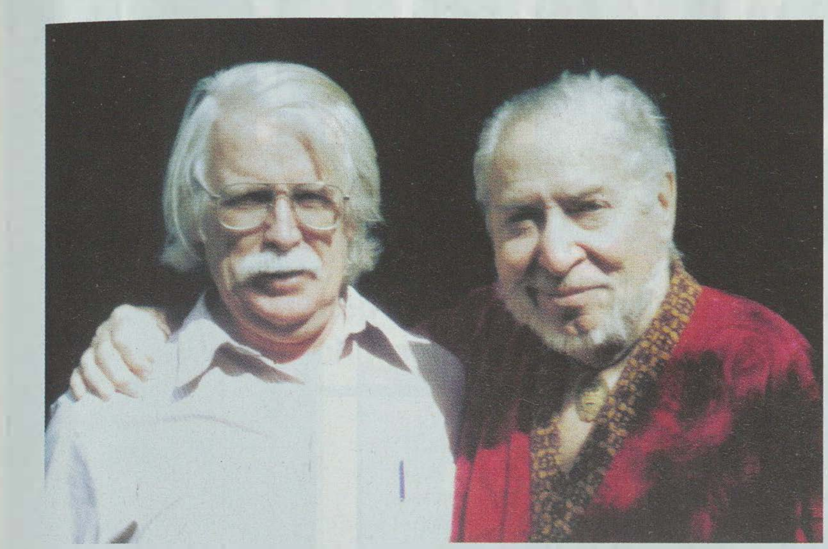
Peter: The story behind the *Lake Monsters* book is as follows. I happened to see the film taken at Loch Ness by Tim Dinsdale when it was first broadcast by the BBC as part of a news programme called *Panorama*. A little later, I took out his first book from the public library and began corresponding with him.

I also, and more importantly, read *On the Track of Unknown Animals* by Bernard Heuvelmans. We also began to correspond, and I stayed in touch with him to the end of his life. We visited him in France from time to time – in Paris, Verliac and le Vesinet. He was a major influence on me. In fact, he provided a long introduction to the French edition of the *Lake Monsters* book.

As I happened to know one or two of the supposed lake monster haunts in Ireland, and being inclined by nature towards research, I began to collect materials, and so started the book while I was still at school, perhaps in about 1962. Writing a book is a long task. I found that school work and college work interfered with my literary labours from time to time. However, the resources of the University of Michigan (where I had gone to study anthropology before switching to English literature) were very fine; as indeed are the research facilities in London. I visited lakes with monster reports in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and while living in Michigan I was more or less in the centre of the lakes from which so many reports have come over the centuries.

A first version of the book was finished by 1969. It eventually found a publisher through the recommendation of John Michell, the author and philosopher. Further revisions delayed its appearance until 1974, and I suppose the rest you know.

However, at that time I was already writing another book called *The Heart Grown Brutal: The Irish Revolution in Literature from Parnell to the Death of Yeats, 1893-1939*, which I suspect may be my most important book. This led to the biographies of Joyce, Verne, and others that I later wrote.



Peter Costello
THE MAGIC ZOO
The Natural History of Fabulous Animals

LEFT: Peter Costello (left) with Dr Bernard Heuvelmans at the Cryptozoological Centre, then at Le Vesinet outside Paris, in the summer of 2000, the year before the 'father of Crypotzoology' died. Their friendship went back to the summer of 1962.

> **"I stayed in touch with Heuvelmans to the end of his life"**

Loren: You have written extensively about Joyce. So, are you better known as a Joycean, now?

Peter: I now consider myself a "retired Joycean" – and perhaps ought to be seen too as a "retired cryptozoologist". I have many other projects in hand though.

Loren: One rumour going around is that you might revise and republish your cryptozoological works, in spite of this alleged "retirement". Is that correct?

Peter: I had in mind a book called *Beasts Beyond Belief: Strange Creatures of Celtic Seas and Waters*, a large part of which has been done, but is not progressing much due to other calls.

I was also anxious to do a new and better edition of *The Magic Zoo*. I wasn't happy about the production values of the original editions. Also, there is a pirated Serbo-Croat edition which I have never seen.

Loren: Anything in the works?

Peter: I recently did a book published in London and New York, as well as in French and Spanish, called *Conan Doyle: Detective*. As a follow-up, in a way, to this is a project I am now working on called *Death and Dr Bronte*, about an Irish forensic scientist in London in the 1920s, a great rival to the once famous, now notorious, Sir Bernard Spilsbury.

Loren: Peter, finally, I had been looking for you for a while and found you here, writing for a Roman Catholic newspaper in Dublin, *The Irish Catholic*. I've read some of your interesting columns on the new Pope, and they are all very contemporary and insightful. The one entitled "St Malachy, the New Pope and the End of the World" was balanced, sceptical, but very intriguing to come across in a Vatican-read newspaper. What appeals to you about writing for *The Irish Catholic*?

Peter: The newspaper work is more literary than religious, though the subject matter cannot be said to be too alien to someone educated by the Jesuits who is also a biographer of Joyce! And it caters to my mystical side. FT

The published books of Peter Costello include:

In Search of Lake Monsters (Garnstone Press, 1974)

In Search of Lake Monsters (Panther, 1975; paperback edition)

Heart Grown Brutal: Irish Revolution in Literature from Parnell to the Death of Yeats, 1891-1939 (Gill & Macmillan, 1977)

Jules Verne: Inventor of Science Fiction (Hodder & Stoughton, 1978)

The Magic Zoo: The Natural History of Fabulous Animals, Including Dragons, Mermaids, Unicorns and Centaurs (St. Martin's Press, 1979)

James Joyce (Gill & Macmillan, 1980)

Leopold Bloom: A Biography (Gill & Macmillan, 1981)

Jules Verne: Inventor of Science Fiction (Scribner, 1983)

Dublin Churches (Gill & Macmillan, 1989)

Clongowes Wood: A History of Clongowes Wood College, 1814-1989 (Gill & Macmillan, 1989)

The Real World of Sherlock Holmes (Robinson, 1991)

The Life of Leopold Bloom: A Novel (Roberts Rinehart, 1992)

The Very Heart of the City: The Story of Denis Guiney and Clerys (Clery and Co, 1992)

Dublin Literary Pub Crawl (A&A Farmar, 1996)

Dublin Castle in the Life of the Irish Nation (Merlin, 1998)

Dublin's Literary Pubs (A&A Farmar, 1999)

Conan Doyle: Detective (Robinson, 2006)

Denis Guiney (UCD, 2008)

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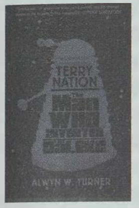
reviews

The Doctor's self-plagiarist

Stakhanovite failed comic Terry Nation plundered his own and others' plots for the sci-fi scripts he churned out, but had the foresight to retain copyright of the Daleks



Terry Nation

The Man Who Invented The Daleks

Alwyn W Turner

Aurum Press 2013

Pb, 344pp, illus, refs, bib, ind, £8.99, ISBN 9781781310410

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.54

Terry Nation once quipped that while many claimed the Daleks had really been their idea, no one pretended they were the real author of 'The Keys to Marinus', Nation's unmemorable early non-Dalek *Doctor Who* story. That didn't stop Nation recycling numerous ideas from 'Marinus' into his later *Blake's Seven* sci-fi series, and repeating them in his Dalek stories. Nation's 1970s post-apocalypse drama *The Survivors* had the same title as the first draft of his first Dalek script. A *Who* producer once reminded Nation to "avoid any resemblance to your previous shows, i.e. a group of fugitives hunted through the jungle by Daleks." As Alwyn W Turner brings to our attention in this biography of Dalek scriptwriter Terry Nation, many of Nation's *Who* and *Blake's Seven* plot devices were just recyclings of HG Wells.

Although remembered as one of TV's greatest sci-fi writers, Nation was a failed comic – he was once advised, "the jokes are good: it's you who's not funny." He penned gags for a scriptwriting agency set up by Spike Milligan, Eric Skyes and Steptoe writer Ray Galton, and came to comedy just as comedians were beginning to admit their jokes were not all their own work. Nation wrote for comic genius Tony Hancock's last ill-fated TV series and theatre tour. The ever-affable Nation somehow managed to keep working with the increasingly volatile and drunk Hancock – Nation said he was paid £100 in 1950s money "basically for babysitting" Hancock. His duties included covering up the unfortunate incident involving a naked Hancock in a train compartment.

Plentiful work for Hancock caused Nation to turned down the first *Who* script he was offered. The inevitable Hancockian falling-out followed. But that new children's sci-fi drama was still on the table, so Nation began writing what became the first Dalek series as a Saturday job, devising gags for an Eric Sykes-hosted revue being his day job. Tony Hancock's younger brother Richard became Nation's formidable agent – the BBC knew every *Jim'll Fix It* Dalek walk-on meant an invoice in the post next morning.

Fan folklore about why there's so little Dalek in the 1990s *Doctor Who* TV movie, and fan legends about planned *Who/Blake's Seven* crossovers, are demythologised here. I was particularly interested in the small print on Nation's now-legendary 1963 contract reserving for him the copyright of the Daleks. Turner says this was the result of BBC failure to grasp the then new concept of "merchandising", or the implications of Beryl Vertue, secretary at Nation's agents (later a TV producer) crossing out what she told them was an unnecessary contractual clause on merchandising.

> **"*What a Whopper*, starring the *Carry On* team, is like *Alien Autopsy* but with the Loch Ness Monster"**

Saturday job though it may have originally been, Dalek merchandising earned Nation immense wealth, although Turner agrees the rumoured seven-figure sum he earned from 1960s Dalekmania was exaggerated. Nation toasted with champagne a deal reached with the Pertwee-era *Who* producers regarding first refusal on Dalek scripts and the commissioning of what became 'Planet of the Daleks'. It dawned on the visiting *Who* team that this wasn't a special celebratory tipple; Nation made so much money from Dalek spin-offs that he routinely drank the stuff.

After moving to Los Angeles in the 1980s, Nation tried unsuccessfully to get various shows and films realised. Apart from some script doctoring on *McGyver*, he did little paid work. He didn't need to – he and his family still lived comfortably off the Daleks.

The Man Who Invented details just how much effort and money Nation spent on trying to get a Daleks TV series commissioned in the States, and how much of a blow it was to him when he ultimately failed. At one point, a studio had been booked and set construction was about to start for The Daleks when the plug was pulled.

Old socialist Cardiff boy Nation attributed his Stakhanovite script output to "my Welsh guilt". He certainly showed the same work ethic when soaking up cultural influences as a child – he bunked off school for a whole term and went to the pictures every afternoon before he was rumbled. The adult Nation churned out scripts at phenomenal speed, exasperated script editors observing that his first draft was often his last. He was said to have run off a *Blake's Seven* episode in five days.

While he was frequently slapdash, Nation was happy to accept changes when editors pointed out that there were three uses of the sprained ankle plot device in a single episode of *Blake's Seven*, or several different ticking bombs in single helping of *Who*.

Although the narrative of Nation's sci-fi œuvre is engaging, the book's episode guides to forgettable adventure series that Nation worked on – *The Saint, The Persuaders! The Champions, The Bàron* – is hard-going. The problem with such a biography is that few readers are fans of 1950s radio comedy, the above-mentioned not very good adventure shows and Nation's sci-fi output.

Cryptozoologists may care to investigate *What a Whopper*, the Swinging (very early) Sixties Nation-scripted comedy starring most of the *Carry On* team and pop star Adam Faith. It's sort of like *Alien Autopsy* but with the Loch Ness monster.

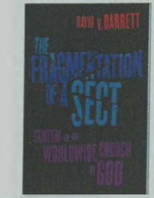
Matt Salusbury

Fortean Times Verdict

GRIPPING TALE OF TV'S GREATEST STORYTELLER AND PLOT RECYCLER **7**

The ad man's church

Schisms plagued the Worldwide Church of God during its tyrannical and racist founder's life and after his death



The Fragmentation of a Sect

Schism in the Worldwide Church of God

David V Barrett

Oxford University Press 2013
Hb, 283pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £35.00, ISBN 9780199861514
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £31.50

The story of the Worldwide Church of God is that of an ad man's triumph. It shows how insatiable is our appetite for easy answers, and how ready we are to assume that the louder a sermon is, the more reliable its message.

In the mid-1930s Herbert W Armstrong, an advertising executive from Des Moines, founded the picturesquely named 'Radio Church of God'. It changed its name in 1968 to the 'Worldwide Church of God'. Armstrong was short, shrewd, energetic and, depending on whom you ask, either the anointed Last Days prophet of Yahweh – an Elijah of the mid-West – or an exploitative, tyrannical, incestuous, plagiarising, back-stabbing, racist nut-job with a mania for capitalisation. Nuance wasn't his thing. 'Christ was WHITE', he thundered, in a typically hysterical article. 'The Oriental race is a MUTATION from Adam's stock… The same is true of the Negro… MAN perverts God's laws by interbreeding and producing a mongrel or hybrid…'

There was a ready market for this. Sadly, there still is. Armstrong served up the sort of theological fare that must have smelled spicy to the ideologically starving of America. The Trinity is a false doctrine; Jesus is about to arrive to roll up the Universe; True Believers (those who acknowledge Armstrong) will rule the world during the coming millennium; Jesus was crucified on Wednesday and rose on Saturday (hence a Saturday, not a Sunday, Sabbath); the seven annual Jewish festivals must be observed, as must the Jewish dietary laws; Christmas, Easter and so on, are diabolically pagan; tithing is obligatory; Americans (or, more specifically, white Anglo-Saxon Americans), constitute Manasseh, one of the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel; make-up is an abomination ('Women do not use make-up to PLEASE GOD today – for I can tell you ON HIS AUTHORITY it is NOT pleasing to HIM!'); remarriage after divorce is forbidden, and anyone who has married again must split up, regardless of the trauma. And so on.

Armstrong toured the globe, shaking the hands of celebrities and statesmen (after his aides had written the cheques demanded for the photos), kept a diary of his own masturbation, and apparently (he never denied it) had a sexual relationship with his daughter from the time she was 13.

He didn't lack self-confidence. "This brings us to a series of almost incredible facts… First, Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry at about age 30. God took away my business, moved me from Chicago, started bringing me to repentance and conversion preparatory to inducting me into His ministry, when I was 30! Second, Jesus began…" But perhaps you've got the point now.

His confidence was undented by his own moral failure and by the non-arrival of the Apocalypse by 1972. "The events prophesied to strike the American and British peoples in the next four to six years are SURE!" he had insisted. He used the usual devices to avoid catastrophic embarrassment: the event did occur, but in the spiritual, invisible realm. Or God, merciful because of the prayers of His chosen people, has delayed the destruction. Or the prophecy wasn't really so date-specific.

There were schisms in the Worldwide Church of God almost from the start, culminating in Armstrong's 1978 'disfellowshipping' of his son and spiritual heir, Garner Ted. But they were nothing to the schisms that occurred after Armstrong's death in 1986.

Nine days before his death, Armstrong had named Joseph W Tkach as his successor, expecting him to be the guardian of the heterodox Worldwide orthodoxy. And at first it seemed that Tkach was doing the job. The church published a list of '18 Restored Truths' – essentially a statement of the Armstrongite creed. "Where would we be without these truths?" it asked at the end of the list. "Without them… there isn't much left." Yet no sooner was the ink dry than Tzach set about systematically disowning almost all of them. The watershed was Tzach's 1994 Christmas Eve sermon. It lasted three hours, and by the end it was clear that Tzach was a pretty run of the mill conservative evangelical.

Many of church's congregants came with him. Many did not. The psychology and sociology of each group are the fascinating primary subjects of this book. Barrett has written a masterly and highly readable study of cognitive dissonance, self-deception and malleability. It can be read on many levels. Many will enjoy it simply as a cabinet full of psychological grotesques. Others will find that Barrett holds up a mirror that forces them to see their own intellectual dishonesty. It's a rare book that is both truly scholarly and truly entertaining. This is one.

Charles Foster

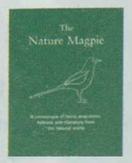
Fortean Times Verdict
A MASTERFUL, HIGHLY READABLE STUDY OF SELF-DECEPTION **9**

The Nature Magpie

A Cornucopia of Facts, Anecdotes, Folklore and Literature from the Natural World

Daniel Allen

Icon Books, 2013
Hb, 244pp, illus, bib, £12.99, ISBN 9781848315334
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11 69



A late entry in the crowded field of cute little miscellanies that were all the rage for a while, Daniel Allen's book promises a "cornucopia of facts, anecdotes, folklore and literature from the natural world". It delivers just that, providing a bran tub full of informational morsels on everything from cloud classification and mammal tracks to bird song and tree diseases, as well as entries relating to mankind's relationship with the natural world as expressed in myth, literature, science and popular culture. For example, we get a round-up of Creation myths, from Hebrew to Zulu, and a consideration of the idea of seeking solitude in nature, taking in Thoreau's celebrated sojourn at Walden Pond and Timothy Treadwell's rather more hazardous decision to live with wild bears in Alaska (one that, famously, ended with him being eaten by them).

There's some enjoyable forteana to be found within: the Vegetable Lamb of Tartary puts in an appearance, for instance, as do unusually smart sheep (in fact, they're all much brighter than is generally believed it seems), outsized snakes, appearing and disappearing islands, roadkill connoisseurs and the thorny question of plant perception.

The book also attempts to deal with some pretty major concepts (conservation, biodiversity, evolution, extinction) in mostly brief but illuminating entries, and is bang up to date in considering the issues around biosecurity and disease that have lately come to a head with the spread of bovine TB and the UK government's trial, and deeply unpopular, badger cull. Yes, it's all a bit superficial – as any miscellany is – but it makes for an informative toilet read, and the extensive bibliography of printed and online resources provides useful pointers for further exploration.

David Sutton

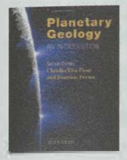
Fortean Times Verdict
GREAT FUN AND INFORMATIVE (IF YOU DON'T REQUIRE DEPTH) **7**

Planetary Geology

An Introduction

Claudio VitaFinzi & Dominic Fortes

Dunedin Academic Press 2013
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69



The Earth shares much of its history with the other planets and lesser bodies of the Solar System. They were all formed around the same time from the same basic material, and over billions of years they have been subjected to similar forces and cosmic influences. Yet geology has traditionally been seen as the study of the Earth alone, with the other planets warranting little more than the occasional footnote. Historically the reason for this is obvious: until the latter years of the 20th century there was no way to study the Earth's Solar System neighbours in anything but the most cursory detail. But with the recent profusion of deep-space probes and powerful space-based telescopes that is no longer the case.

As an object of study, our own planet is no longer unique.

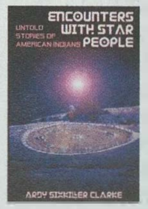
This is perhaps the most democratic book about geology you will ever find. It talks about the Earth, of course, but it also talks about the Moon, Mars, Venus, Europa, Titan and a dozen other worlds. Like any geology textbook it discusses surface topography, internal structure, magnetic fields, volcanoes, plate tectonics and atmospheric processes – but it does so by drawing on a wide range of examples and not the usual sample of one. This isn't a book for the casual reader, but it's not gratuitously technical either… and it's packed full of wonderful images.

Andrew May

Fortean Times Verdict
PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED, FASCINATING AND INFORMATIVE **10**

First nation UFO tales

It appears that American Indians' encounters with UFOs show the same high weirdness as their mainstream counterparts



Encounters with Star People

Untold Stories of American Indians

Ardy Sixkiller Clarke

Anomalist Books 2012
Pb, 191pp, $15.95, ISBN 1933665726
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £12.99

Ardy Sixkiller Clarke quotes Tim Giago, founder/editor of the popular reservation newspaper *Indian Country Today*: "Any politically correct thinker who believes Native American is the preferred identification tag for the Lakota or any other tribe is wrong…" Whatever its current meaning, 'Native American' has its roots in a racist 19th-century past as a phrase nativists intended to separate themselves from newly-arrived immigrants. Those who used it meant those born in the United States and, not incidentally, possessed of white skin. This book is about American Indians.

As activist, educator, and counselor, Dr Clarke, a Professor Emeritus at Montana State University, maintains a wide range of friends and acquaintances among Indians in the American West. She is also interested in UFOs. Thus, probably no one else can lay claim to the particular constellation of contacts, skills, and knowledge that make possible *Encounters With Star People.* Indian communities tend to be closed to outsiders, but over more than two decades, Clarke's cross-tribal ties and sympathetic personality led her to a thousand informants willing to relate their sometimes highly strange UFO experiences.

It is from that testimony that Clarke has compiled the present work.

Don't expect the sort of book that either an investigative ufologist or an academic folklorist would have produced. Encounters consists of informal conversations, presented inside quotation marks. Clarke, unfortunately, is unclear on whether these were recorded electronically, written down at the time, or merely reconstructed after the fact. (One informant does mention a tape recorder.) This crucial matter ought to have been clarified, and I hope it will be in promised future volumes based on her interactions with indigenous witnesses in Latin America and the South Pacific.

Clarke cloaks her informants in anonymity, mostly to protect them from ridicule. Ridicule of persons claiming UFO sightings is as much a part of the psychosociology of reservation culture as it is of its mainstream equivalent, even though in some tribal groups, encounters are linked to traditions of Star People believed to be their ancestors.

Strikingly, the contents of the recounted experiences – putting their interpretations aside – seem indistinguishable from high strangeness of the kind recorded in the most relevant example that comes to mind, Michael D Swords's *Grassroots UFOs: Case Reports from the Center for UFO Studies* (2005). Clarke relates one notable exception: an accomplished and not obviously deranged woman (since deceased) who identified herself as an alien. Clarke was able to confirm, if nothing else, that she appeared to lack a navel.

Of her informants she writes, "These individuals searched me out" or "were referred to me by a relative or a friend… Seventy-five per cent of the interviewees lived on reservations in 15 states…. Approximately 30 per cent were college-educated; they were teachers, law enforcement investigators or practitioners, [and] tribal administrators. Another 25 per cent were respected elders. The remaining were individuals of varying educational levels."

Their stories, on occasion involving independent or multiple witnesses whom Clarke sought out, include close encounters of various kinds, abductions (including a particularly dramatic one in which two friends were taken into separate UFOs), and even a pre-Roswell crash.

Whether these surpass your boggle threshold depends upon how you feel about UFOs. I am willing to take Clarke's word for it that the individuals telling these stories are sincere, though it may be wise to consider that experiences may not always be synonymous with events. That, incidentally, is not meant dismissively. Whatever you make of these accounts, you're likely to enjoy this unusual book and to look forward to its sequels.

Jerome Clark

Fortean Times Verdict
UNUSUAL STUDY OF UFO SIGHTINGS BY AMERICAN INDIANS **8**

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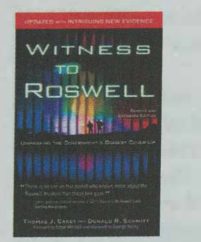
Balloon or cover-up?

One narrative has a crashed weather balloon and crash test dummies; the competing story has a downed saucer and aliens



Witness to Roswell

Unmasking the Government's Biggest Cover-Up

Thomas J Carey and Donald R Schmitt

New Page Books 2009
Pb, 318pp, $16.99, ISBN 9781601630667
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £14.99

What is most impressive about veteran UFO researchers Thomas J Carey and Donald R Schmitt's study is the number of interviews they conducted with key figures.

On 4 July 1947, WW 'Mac' Brazel discovered debris on the New Mexico ranch where he worked. Deputy Sheriff BA 'Bernie' Clark phoned the sheriff, George M Wilcox, who recommended that Brazel contact the Army Air Base. On 7July, two intelligence officers from the Roswell Army Air Field arrived. The next day, Colonel Blanchard announced that 509th Bomber Squadron had captured a crashed flying saucer outside Roswell. The press release showed a photo of pieces of the saucer. News services picked up the story. General Roger Ramey of the 8th Air Force announced that the original report had been a mistake. At a hastily organised press conference, photographers were permitted to take a few shots of wreckage of what was supposed to be a weather balloon. Brazel told Frank Joyce, the KGFL radio announcer, that he found what appeared to be the wreckage of a flying saucer with "little people" near the crash site. The military detained Brazel for the better part of a week. After his release, he recanted; his find was consistent with the balloon explanation. According to family and associates, Brazel remained convinced that what he had discovered was a flying saucer.

The Roswell story was all but forgotten, but in early 1978, Jesse Marcel, an intelligence officer of the 509th Bomb Group at the time of the incident, announced that what was retrieved was no weather balloon, but rather something that was "not of this Earth". Numerous witnesses corroborated the crashed saucer version of the story. In the 1990s, the UFO community attempted to generate congressional interest in the incident. Rep. Steven Schiff asked the Government Accounting Office (GAO) and Air Force to investigate the incident. The 1995 GAO report concluded there was no evidence of an alien craft; two Air Force reports asserted that none had crashed. The Air Force conceded that witnesses could have misidentified a balloon and anthropomorphic dummies from the classified Project Mogul, a mission to detect hydrogen bomb tests using instrumented balloons. The dummies were used in high-altitude parachute tests. Schiff was unconvinced and accused the government of a "massive ongoing cover-up".

Sceptics often dismiss the Roswell incident because of a lack of trace evidence. But as Carey and Schmitt point out, eyewitness testimony is considered credible and can even be used to convict someone of murder. They assert more than 600 people directly or indirectly associated with the incident supported the claim of a flying saucer recovery.

In 1998, the authors visited Frank Joyce, who claimed that after his interview with Brazel, he was taken against his will to a military hospital in Texas. When he was released, he was told not to return to Roswell. After he retired, he revealed his story about Mac Brazel finding the wreckage and the bodies.

The authors found a frequent correlation between rank and reluctance to talk about the incident, which suggested to them that the veterans feared losing their pensions. However, there were exceptions. Arthur E Exon, a retired brigadier general, claimed that material dubbed "memory metal" arrived at Wright Field for testing. It was like foil, but could not be dented and reverted to flatness after being crumpled. He was convinced it was not from Earth. Glenn Dennis, from the Ballard Funeral Home, claimed the base inquired about "children's caskets" and that a friend who worked at its hospital had seen dead "foreign bodies" on gurneys. Dennis claimed that military personnel threatened his life if he revealed the story.

In a statement released after his death, First Lieut Warren Haut, the PR officer who had announced that the Air Force had captured a flying saucer, confirmed this, the "memory metal" and the alien bodies. The authors believe that he waited to disclose the 'truth' because he wanted to keep his word to his friend Colonel Blanchard.

There has been a dearth of documentary and physical evidence to make a convincing case that a flying saucer crashed in New Mexico.

Carey and Schmitt concede that this "holy grail" of the Roswell case remains elusive. But the authors have provided a wealth of testimonies from key figures involved in the incident. The consistency in these accounts reinforces their credibility. As a result, *Witness to Roswell* will now make it difficult for the sceptics to dismiss the incident as a myth.

George Michael

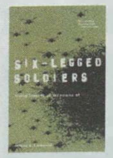
Fortean Times Verdict
EXHAUSTIVE STUDY OF THE POSSIBLE EVENTS AT ROSWELL **8**

Six-Legged Soldiers

Using Insects as Weapons of War

Jeffrey A Lockwood

Oxford University Press 2010
Hb, 377pp, illus, notes, ind, $27.95, ISBN 9780195333053
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £14.99



This is not a critique of the cyborg 'ultimate warrior' movie genre, but something far more interesting. Lockwood asks how likely it is that governments can use (or are using) insects as a form of biological warfare. He surveys what insects can inflict on their own and other species: toxins, viruses, parasites, diseases, famine and madness, delivered by bites, stings, territorial and bodily invasion, piracy, theft, assassination and much worse. Lockwood, a professor of natural sciences, chronicles mankind's employment of insectoid vectors.

The atrocities (actual and potential) are terrible: insect-borne diseases changed the course of battles; forest-dwellers and bushmen harvest poisons to coat their weapons; and the Emir of Bukhara tortured his prisoners with flesh-eating beetles. General Ishii spread swarms of fleas carrying bubonic plague from Japan's infamous Unit 731, built in Manchuria in 1939. One of the US's concerns over the 'Fugo' balloons that crossed to Washington State from Japan in WWII was that they might be carrying similar biological weapons. During the Cold War, the US government was accused of causing famines in North Korea and Cuba with crop-eating pests.

Lockwood warns against complacency. The 'usual suspects' of clandestine biological warfare – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and North Korea – are all pretty chaotic right now; and, in an uncomfortably modern case, ecoterrorists threatened to decimate US fruit production by introducing the Medfly into California. This is a highly detailed, well-researched and grippingly told study that illuminates a dark side of the nature of man and insect.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict
A GRIPPING STUDY OF A SMALL BUT POTENTIALLY DEADLY FOE **9**

Sci-fi and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett on a man in mittens, changelings and kidnapped kids, a valley girl out of her element, Snow White revisioned and two spin-offs from a classy TV series

The Man from Primrose Lane

James Renner

Corsair 2013
Pb, 454pp, £7.99, ISBN 9781472100146
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £7.59

Dreams and Shadows

C Robert Cargill

Gollancz 2013
Hb, 408pp, £14.99, ISBN 9780575130098
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £13.49

Among Others

Jo Walton

Corsair 2013
Pb, 408pp, £7.99, ISBN 9781472106537
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £7.59

Poison

Sarah Pinborough

Gollancz 2013
Hb, 208pp, £9.99, ISBN 9780575092976
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £9.49

Fringe: The Zodiac Paradox

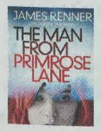
Christa Faust

Titan Books 2013
Pb, 355pp, £6.99, ISBN 9781781163092
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £6.64

Fringe: September's Notebook

Tara Bennett & Paul Terry

Titan Books 2013
Hb, 192pp, £29.99, ISBN 9781781166093
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £26.99

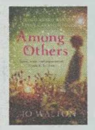


Journalist David Neff once wrote a bestseller on a serial killer; now he's been persuaded to investigate the death of an elderly recluse, eponymously *The Man from Primrose Lane*, who always wore mittens, even in summer, and whose body was found with all the fingers hacked off. His identity was false, and notebooks in his house detail the life of a young woman from six to 18. When Neff meets her he's stunned by the resemblance to his dead wife, whose twin was snatched when she was 10. His wife's fingerprint is found in the old man's house – on the headboard of his bed. There are killers of red-haired girls, and stalkers of killers of red-haired girls. Neff becomes obsessed in identifying the old man and saving more girls from kidnap – but then he's accused of murder himself. Add to this a strange figure stepping out of a 10-foot-high egg-shaped container that suddenly appears in the woods...

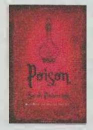
It's a shame that the blurb of James Renner's novel, "Love. Murder. Time travel" gives the major plot twist away before you've even begun reading it – the alert reader will figure out who the *Man from Primrose Lane* is quite early on – but this is a clever and confusing tale that will keep you guessing about many details of the story till the end.

Dreams and Shadows, a strong first novel from C Robert Cargill, is an unusual take on the world of fairy. Changelings – fairy babies substituted for human babies – have long been part of folklore. But what happens to the kidnapped child? The first half of the novel follows the stories of seven-year-old Ewan and Knocks, his mis-shapen fairy copy, and others in the fairy kingdom outside Austin, Texas. There are fairies who kidnap babies, the Bendith Y Mamau; Bubers, forest bogies who suck the life from humans; Redcaps, who are simply murderous; and there's Coyote, the trickster. Interspersed with their story is that of Colby, an eight-year-old boy who persuades a world-weary djinni to take him into the fairy world – and to give him wizard's powers. And then Colby and Ewan meet.

All of this is merely the prologue to the second half of the book, when Ewan and Colby are 21 and 22 and living difficult lives in Austin. Knocks, who has always loathed Ewan, comes looking for him – and he's not the only one. This is the real meat of the novel, adult and painful, with some excellent scenes of conflict between the worlds of human and fairy. Part One was necessary to set the scene for Part Two – but it could have done without being nearly 200 pages long.



Jo Walton's *Among Others* is the journal of 15-year-old Mori, a Welsh valley girl sent to an English boarding school by her useless father after she runs away from her witch of a mother. She's the wrong class, has the wrong accent and has a bad limp from the accident that killed her twin sister. Mori can see fairies – that's what she and her sister called them, but they seem to be nature spirits, can appear in different forms and communicate in a very abstract way. What keeps Mori going through her lonely and fairly unhappy time at school is her love for SF and fantasy; the book is absolutely dripping with meaningful references to what she's just read – a nostalgic treat for those of us who read the same books at the same age, but really little more than an extended reading list which at times becomes self-indulgent. It's an enjoyable read, very nicely written, with an interesting angle on magic – but there's almost no plot and the only significant character is the narrator. Despite that it won the Hugo, Nebula and British Fantasy Awards.



While we're on fairies, look out for *Poison*, a beautifully illustrated dark and sexy recasting of Snow White by Sarah Pinborough. *Charm* and *Beauty*, retellings of Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty, will follow.

TV spin-offs can be rubbish or brilliant, and here's one of each from the wonderful series *Fringe*, now sadly finished. *Fringe: The Zodiac Paradox*, the first of three novelisations by Christa Faust, tells of how two grad students, Walter Bishop and William Bell, along with a young Nina Sharp, open a portal to a parallel world through their drug experimentation, and accidentally drag over a thoroughly unpleasant serial killer, as well as causing all sorts of other harm.

It's badly-written hackwork telling a very average story; it has none of the sparkle, wit and marvellous inventiveness of the TV series.

In contrast, the creators of *Fringe: September's Notebook* must have had a whale of a time putting this pricey but lovely work together. It's a big faux-leather-bound book of files, photos and case-notes on Walter, Olivia, Peter and Astrid, their Fringe cases, their alternate world counterparts and much more, as if compiled by the sympathetic Watcher known as September – the one who broke the rules by intervening when Walter stole the young Peter from the alternate world, saving their lives when they were drowning. What makes the book really fun are all the inserts: fold-out pages with schematics of Peter's machine from the end of season 3, photo booth snapshots of Peter and Olivia, classified envelopes containing FBI intelligence reports, a wanted poster for our heroes and a resistance poster featuring Etta from Season 5, even an envelope addressed to Walter Bishop without a white tulip.

The whole thing has been done with such love and care, it's an absolute delight, and would be a great gift for any fan of the series.

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.

The Wolverine

Dir James Mangold, US 2013
On UK release from 25 July

The story involves a WWII prelude in which prisoner-of-war Logan (a super-pumped Hugh Jackman) saves sympathetic Japanese camp guard Yashida from the Nagasaki atomic bomb. Race forward to the present. A post *X-Men: Last Stand* Logan, haunted by the death of Jean Grey, gets a visitor to the chilly Yukon dungeon he is holed up in. Young Samurai warrior Yukio asks him to travel to Japan where Yashida, now an all-powerful Japanese business magnate, wants to say thank you from his deathbed to Logan by handing over his sacred samurai sword. (Of all the presents you could give to a man with adamantium blades for fingers.)

No sooner has Yashida shuffled off the mortal coil than Logan finds himself in the middle of a family struggle for Yashida's vast wealth, which has been left to his granddaughter, Mariko. Yashida's son Shingen is none too happy about that, and will stop at nothing to wrest the fortune from Mariko, including using Ninja-clad yakuza to kidnap her. Logan finds himself as Mariko's protector, and very soon gets a whole lot closer to her as a result. Throw into the mix the little matter of Yashida having found a way to remove Logan's immortality with the help of the mutant Viper, posing as Yashida's oncologist, and our hero now hurts, bleeds and doesn't heal.

All well and good. The problem is that the love interest with Mariko is an awfully long-winded way for Logan to overcome his loss of Jean. Mariko's character (through no fault of actress Tao Okomoto) is simply not interesting enough to take her place. The character of Yukio (Rila Fukushima), a surrogate sister to Mariko, certainly is. A living animé (and that means barely post-pubescent, palpably sexualised), samurai sword-wielding assassin with mutant traits, a sort of benign *Kill Bill* O-Ren Ishii. The screen lights up whenever she appears and sets about kicking ass and severing hoodlums' limbs. There are some splendid set pieces, one involving a battle on a high-speed Japanese bullet train, an extended pursuit sequence at Yashida's funeral and other flash Wolverine 'fisticuts' that director James Mangold throws in; yet I for one came away curiously uninvolved and underwhelmed, especially by yet another climactic boss battle with yet another ruddy great big robot thingy.

It is refreshing, though, to see *The Wolverine* scaling down CGI overkill with a more character-based storyline to provide some emotional content. As a film, its closest cousin is not the previous Wolverine outing, but *Elektra* (another tale from the Frank Miller stable in the Marvel mythos). When transferred to the screen, both had great leads and some exciting set-pieces – yet both have storylines which, fatally on the part of the screenplay writers, do not follow with their noses what is right in front of them: young acolyte in *Elektra* – not interesting; young acolyte in *The Wolverine* – very interesting; love interest in both – uninteresting. *The Wolverine* remains an admirable attempt to avoid being just another blockbuster SFX-fest, replacing hard but ultimately hollow action with an emotional core, but it contains only a promise of a satisfying pay-off when it hints at what is to come (courtesy of the Easter egg mid-way through the end credits) rather than builds on what has already gone before.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict
NEW MARVEL ISN'T REALLY A CUT ABOVE THE REST **6**

Falling Skies Season 2

Created by Robert Rodat, US 2013
Warner Home Video, £29.99 (DVD)

Earth has been invaded by aliens who have killed off 90 per cent of the population and are enslaving or "harnessing" children by implanting a bio-mechanical mind control device on their spines. *Falling Skies* follows the efforts of a resistance group called the Second Massachusetts Militia Regiment (one of many references to the American Revolutionary War). They have to fight against the invaders – Skitters, Mechs and the mysterious Overlords – while struggling to survive with the entire infrastructure of American civilisation gone.

History professor Tom Mason (Noah Wyle) is second-in-command of the 2nd Mass, under its captain Dan Weaver (Will Patton). At the end of the first season Mason deliberately went on board an alien ship; season two begins three months later with his return. His love-interest Dr Anne Glass (Moon Bloodgood) removes a parasitic worm from his eye – rather similar to the Hive creatures getting in through facial orifices in *Dark Skies* – so has he been corrupted by the aliens?

Much of this season is about Mason and his three young sons, one of whom, Ben (Connor Jessup), had been harnessed, but has now been freed from it – leaving behind a row of spikes that light up when the aliens are contacting him. Is he still under their control? And can we trust him when he says some of the Skitters want to rebel against their Overlords with human help?

Part way through the story, the 2nd Mass learn of a community which is rebuilding American civilisation in Charleston, South Carolina, and set off from Massachusetts in their battered vehicles to join it, encountering a series of challenges, attacks and heartaches along the way. But will Charleston be the promised land they are hoping for?

It's all very American frontiersman, with lots of shootin' an' killin' an' heroics, but not a great deal else in the way of plot. The aliens are ugly, 1940s pulp SF stereotypes who shoot first and ask questions later, if at all, but they don't seem very bright when confronted with the wit and guile of our heroes, the resourcefulness of the American spirit. Did I mention cliché and stereotype?

There's little original in the story; situations, plotting, characters and dialogue are largely predictable. "You got to hold on to your hate, Dad. If you can do that, it doesn't matter what they've done to you. They won't be able to change you inside." "You're right. Hate is a very powerful emotion. And I hate them too. But if all you've got left is hate, then they've already changed you."

Visually, the show is nearly monochrome; a lot happens at night, but even daytime scenes are largely composed of greys and greens – military colours.

When so many innovative TV SF series are axed in their first seasons – the networks can't cope with quirky creativity – it's almost inevitable that a safe, predictable series gets renewed. As I review this DVD of the second season of *Falling Skies*, a third season has begun airing and a fourth has been commissioned. Why? Partly perhaps because Steven Spielberg is executive producer; he had previously worked with the show's creator Robert Rodat on *Saving Private Ryan*, and knew Wyle from *ER*. But the main reason for the show's success must be because this isn't really SF; it's an homage to the one heroic moment in American history, the one war that they unambiguously won, gaining their freedom from their overlords.

Two actor quotes from the interesting DVD documentary emphasise the point. Noah Wyle, who plays the main hero, says: "We call it a science fiction show, but when you come to play it, it feels much more like a war film"; while Dale Dye, who plays a general, says, "Our nation has been torn asunder by an alien invasion, and we've had to come together much like the minutemen did. We are the reincarnation of the colonial militia."

'Nuff said.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict
REFIGHTING THE REVOLUTION; PREDICTABLE AND POPULAR **6**

The Dyatlov Pass Incident

Dir Renny Harlin, US 2013
On UK release from 23 August

The Dyatlov Pass incident (see **FT245:30-36**) must rank as one of the most intriguing mysteries to come out of the former Soviet Union. February 1959: Nine skiers perish in a remote mountain area of the Urals, and their would-be rescuers find a host of unusual evidence. The skiers seem to have fled their campsite suddenly and in great haste, their partially naked bodies and ripped tents attesting to an almost hysterical flight. Strange skin burns, traces of radiation, crushed bones and missing body parts all serve to deepen the mystery. Theories abound: secret Soviet weapon testing, native curses, aliens... a goldmine for a potential screenplay.

But *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* somehow bypasses this story, with all its potential, and creates a new one involving a group of American students looking to solve the original mystery by recreating the journey through a video diary. So: *Blair Witch* meets *Scooby Doo*. Though directed by the experienced Renny Harlin (*Die Hard 2*, *Deep Blue Sea*), *Dyatlov Pass* often feels amateurish, too aware of its own contrivance but too often unable to maintain the artifice of the genre it has decided to employ in telling its story. From the very start the film suffers from an inability to decide what it wants to be. We get 20 minutes of faux documentary, then, the film becomes a found footage movie. The early Ural town sequence fares best, thanks to some seemingly authentic Russian actors and locations, but the idea that this is simply a poor man's *Blair Witch* is never far from anyone's mind. And where that film's cheap video footage and restricted camera work actually helped make the story believeable and frightening, *Dyatlov's* similar ploy fails to build much momentum. Even worse, the resulting lack of narrative focus actually stretches the viewer's credulity to breaking point and defuses the tension.

The students' slow ascent of the mountain boasts a few mildly suspenseful moments and the discovery of a strange door in the mountain certainly seems promising – but it's at this moment that the film pretty much collapses. Not only does the found footage notion fall apart completely (it's hard to understand who's filming what, or even how!) but the influx of gratuitous, and frankly very ropey, CGI monsters, far-fetched paranormal theories, *deus ex machina* wormholes and an unusually hurried ending destroy any sense of mystery or interest in whatever it was that happened in the preceding hour. However, I suppose it deserves extra points for fitting the Yeti, the Philadelphia Experiment, aliens, time travel, Russian military conspiracy theories and teleportation into one film!

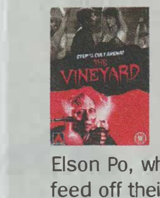
Etienne Gilfillan

Fortean Times Verdict
HOW TO RUIN A GOOD FORTEAN MYSTERY **4**

SHORTS

THE VINEYARD

Arrow Video, £9.99 (DVD)



The Vineyard is arguably one of the finest examples of wine-based horror. Speaking more generally though, it's a ropey head-scratcher that's more curious time capsule than bona fide cult-classic. James Hong (from *Big Trouble in Little China* and *Blade Runner*) plays celebrated winemaker Dr Elson Po, who keeps women tied in his dungeon so he can feed off their youth. Random zombies, 80s dance parties and a woman vomiting live spiders add to the fun, but on the whole it probably needs too many glasses of Shiraz to be truly appreciated. **Rev Peter Laws 5/10**

STATIC

Second Sight, £9.99 (DVD)

Supernatural Indie horror *Static* seems to be getting some good reviews, but I'm not quite sure what the fuss is about. A young writer and his wife are struggling to come to terms with the death of their child (what do you mean you've heard that one before?) But when a strange woman appears, claiming she's being followed by masked men, the couple are drawn into a deadly game of cat-and-mouse. The press release claims it has "one of the most chilling film finales of recent years". Hmmm. It seemed fairly generic to me – although there is a sub-twist at the end that took me by surprise. **Rev PL 7/10**

BLACK SABBATH / BARON BLOOD

Arrow Video, £14.99 each (DVD+Blu-ray)

Mario Bava fans must be dancing around their Blu-ray players now that more of the Italian maestro's work is coming out in HD. Just as well, because the director's eye for image and colour sits perfectly in higher resolutions. *Black Sabbath* is an anthology tale presented by Boris Karloff. 'A Drop of Water', about a nurse who steals a ring from a dead spiritualist, is the best of the bunch. Also released is *Baron Blood* which was a big hit for Bava. Elke Sommer has to deal with the resurrected Baron Otto von Kleist, a murderer brought back by the foolish reading of an ancient incantation. Bava fans will appreciate the attention to detail that Arrow have lavished on these releases (though if I'm honest, I'm more of an Argento guy). **Rev PL 8/10**

THE RETURNED

Arrow Films, £12.99 (DVD)

What do you do when all the recently deceased inhabitants of a French town suddenly and inexplicably come back to life? The usual answer, in your average zombie flick, is to shoot 'em in the head, but as we are here in the slightly more thoughtful world of art-house demi-horror, we're instead presented with no such easy answers. The walking dead are, after all, nice enough, if a bit dimmer than when alive, but they pose huge logistical and bureaucratic problems for the authorities and emotional ones for their living relatives – who aren't always unambiguously pleased to see them. An intriguing premise, but a very dull film. It has since provided the basis for a popular TV series, which at least sounds a lot more fun than than this painfully low-key effort. **David Sutton 5/10**

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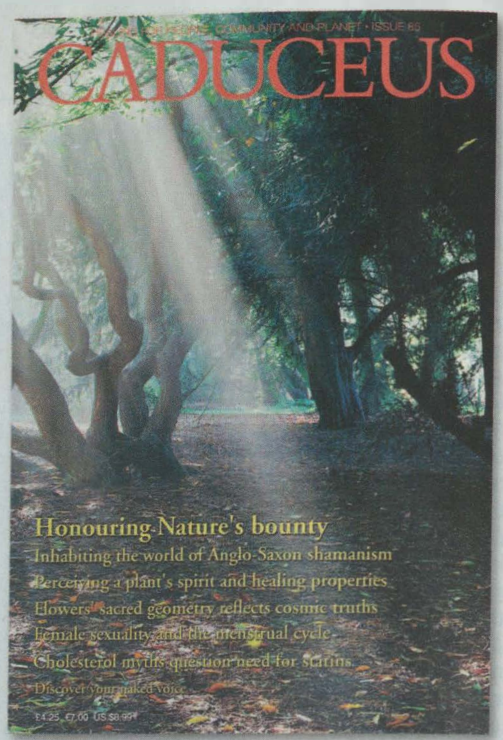
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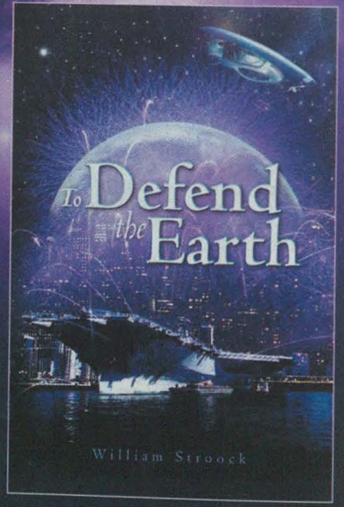

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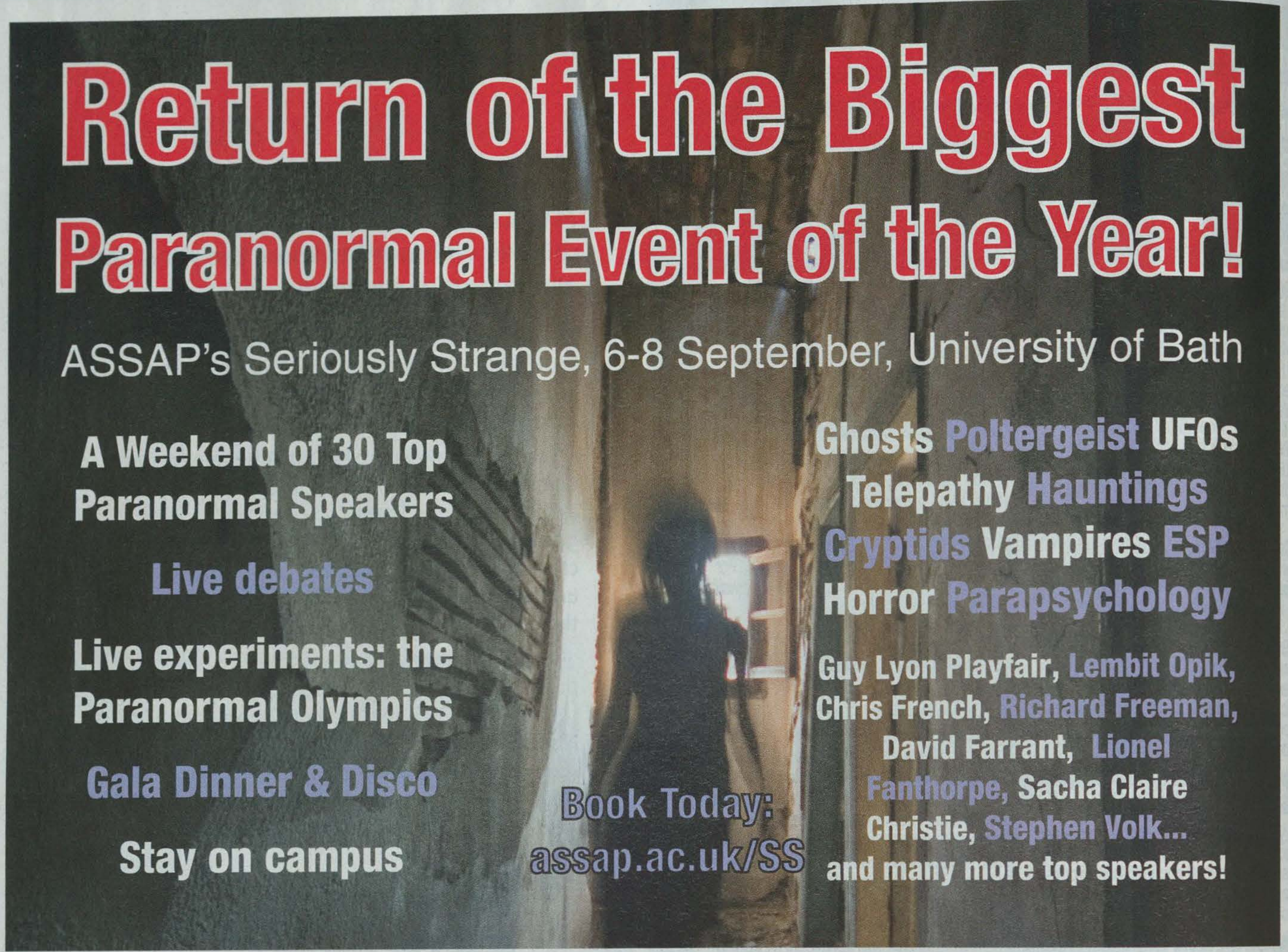

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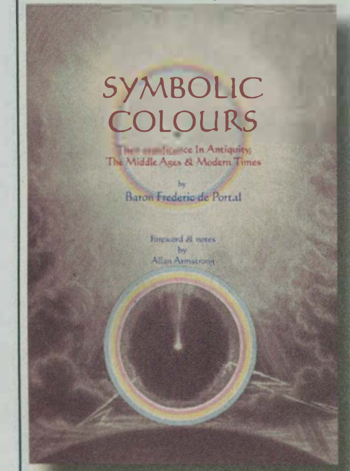

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Dear FT...

letters

Downing Street

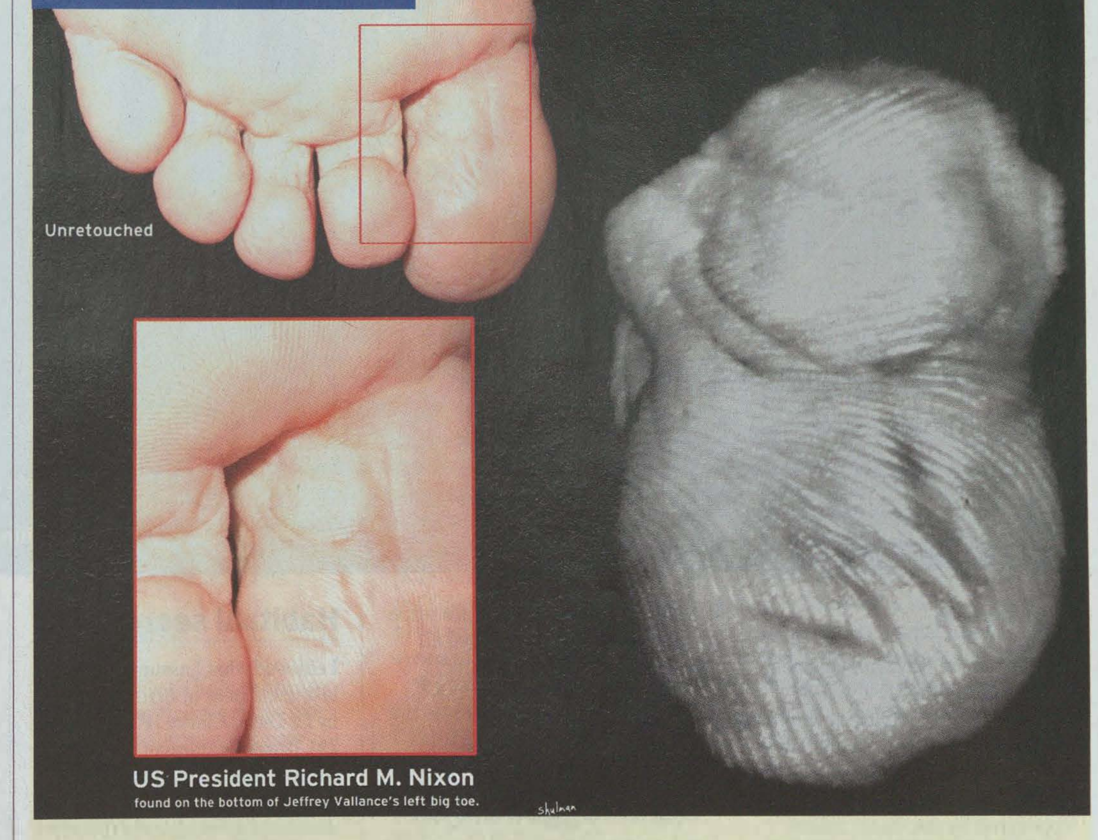
I was recently commissioned to write a *Doctor Who* audio story ('Upstairs', Big Finish Productions, 2013), and decided to set it in the attics of Number 10, Downing Street. My first task was to do what we writers like to call "research" – that is, I went to Oxfam's second-hand book website, and typed "Downing Street" into the search box. This produced a dry-titled, but actually rather lively and anecdotal account: *No. 10 Downing Street 1660-1900* by Hector Bolitho (Hutchinson, 1957).

I was looking for some details of the layout and lore of the famous house to add an authentic touch to my script – but I got much more than I'd hoped for. The story of No 10 turns out to be surprising and frequently bizarre. Jerry-built by a profiteering scoundrel, it was, for much of its life, such a dump that many Prime Ministers simply refused to live in it. (Amongst the leading politicians who *did* reside there, incidentally, was Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Francis Dashwood, founder of the Hell-fire Club.)

But there's also this: what seems to me to be a remarkable number of its inhabitants over the years have suffered mental and physical breakdowns, terrible mysterious illnesses, and deaths from unknown causes. I'd never heard about any of this, and Googling variations on the phrase "the curse of Downing Street" produces nothing useful. It seems odd that one of the world's best-known addresses, having such a history, would not have accrued a gruesome folklore. So I wondered: does any reader know whether No 10 is, or has ever been, famous as a place of evil repute?

Mat Coward
Frome, Somerset

Simulacra corner


Unretouched
US President Richard M. Nixon
found on the bottom of Jeffrey Vallance's left big toe.
Shulman

FT correspondent Jeffrey Vallance writes: "A friend of mine named Dave Shulman took this photograph of my toes. He looked at the image and immediately recognised the visage of Richard Nixon." Curious, considering Jeffrey's obsession with the late US president.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – and please tell us your postal address.

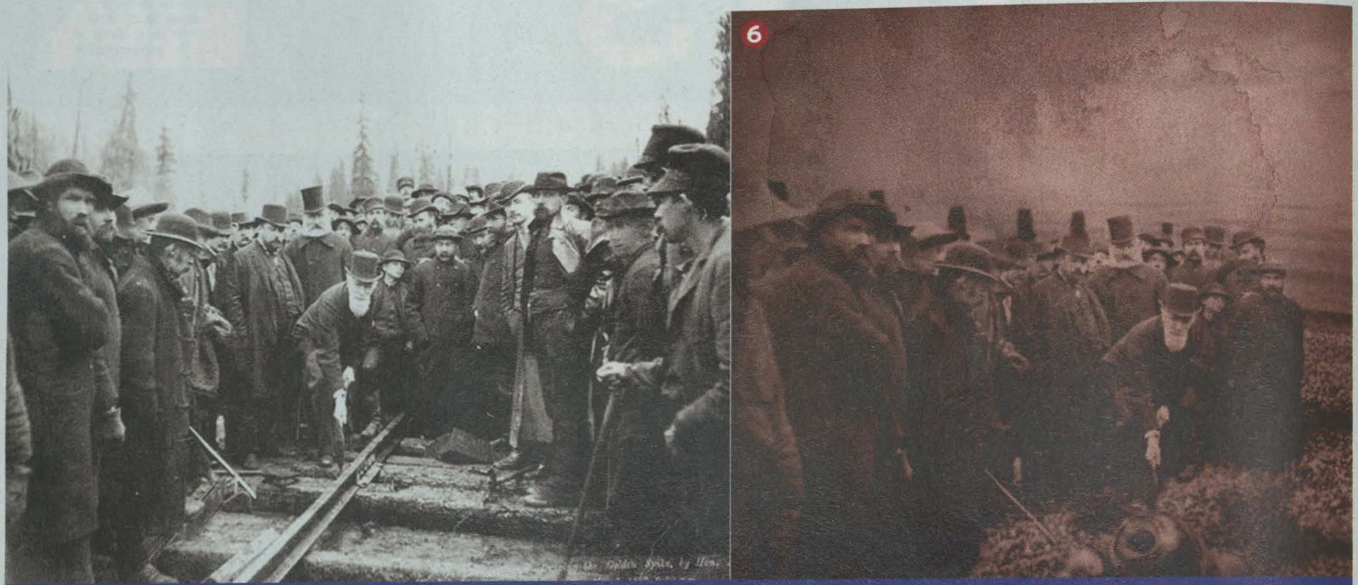
Do elks exist?

Do elks exist, by the strict criteria of the sceptics? I have never seen an elk, although I have lived for nearly 60 years in parts of Norway where they are common. I have of course seen pictures of elks, I have read about car crashes involving elks (very common in Norway, and very dangerous), and I have several friends and close kin who have actually seen the creatures. But can I really be sure that they exist as long as I haven't seen them myself? This is a serious question, as long as sceptics refuse to accept firsthand accounts of, say, ghosts, fish falls, levitation, UFOs, ABCs, SHC and other fortean phenomena.

Granted, the photographic evidence is rather better for elks than for Bigfoot, and I can buy elk meat at the butcher's. But what about more elusive phenomena, such as subatomic particles, the moons of Mars, or Darwinian evolution? As a non-scientist I must simply rely on second- or third-hand evidence of their existence. On the other hand, I *have* seen inexplicable aerial phenomena (twice), heard a ghost (once) and had a number of lesser fortean experiences. I'm a rational as anyone, and I have carefully excluded any conventional explanations for these phenomena. So, by strict sceptical standards, I have better reason to believe in UFOs and ghosts than in elks and electrons.

This also serves as a useful analogy with other fortean situations. Sceptics make much of the fact that only some people are sensitive to ghosts, and even they don't see them all the time. Well, my sister has seen elks several times, walking in the same terrain I often walk in; on the other hand, she doesn't see them all the time – she simply sees them when they're about. I also know a man who has seen Huldra (a Norwegian nature spirit, one of the Little People). He told this to his schoolteacher when he was a boy, and was of course roundly ridiculed. Me, I'm inclined to believe him...

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway



The last spike

Your amusing article on "Weird Whitstable" has a doctored photograph allegedly showing a giant eyeball washed up on the beach in 1899 [**FT301:40**]. Being a Canadian, I recognised this image as the "Last Spike". Donald A Smith is the man with the white beard. He was 65 years old when he struck the last spike on 7 November 1885, which completed the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) when the west rail line met the rail line moving east. The CPR was completed before a huge crowd at the Eagle Pass, Craigallachie in British Columbia.

Alex Solunac, *Victoria, British Columbia*

Emerg-o

Your item on Ray Harryhausen and his skeletons [**FT303:24**] reminded me of *House on Haunted Hill*, an old William Castle movie of 1959 starring Vincent Price. Halfway through, a skeleton, operated by the 'hero', makes an appearance – literally. Using a technique that Castle called Emerg-O, the skeleton, on wires, made its way around the grand circle of the old Stoll Cinema in Newcastle. Needless to say, the audience almost died laughing. I suspect that Emerg-O died the death after that film.

Hutton Barton
Alnwick, Northumberland

Nothing 'normal'

I have to say how much I enjoyed the *FT* articles on Peter Cushing and Whitstable. I remember watching the final crumbling of Dracula through trembling fingers. I used to love all the old Hammer films. The old horror was much more disturbing than blood and gore.

FT is getting better than ever. I believe that there is no such thing as 'normal' – we just use that idea for things that are more common than others. I love all the weirdness. Keep up the excellent work!

Pamela Thornton
By email

Scrapfaggot Green

I was most interested in reading 'The Witch of Scrapfaggot Green' [**FT303:30–35**]. I first came across this story in a book I picked up some years ago, called *Satanism*. This purported to be an A–Z of demons and such like; I believe it was a US publication. As a lad in the late 1960s, I vaguely recall the beginning of a TV play where a bulldozer pushes a large boulder, thereby releasing an entity amid rushing wind. I was once acquainted with a chap who worked for a long-established family firm of funeral directors in Billericay, Essex, who was born and bred in the area of Great Leighs. Knowing that he had lived in that part of Essex, I asked him about the story and what he knew. He had never heard of it, bearing out the conclusion of the *FT* article: the story was made up.

Ron Knight
Holland on Sea, Essex

Habitual secrecy

I enjoyed what I assume is the last instalment of *Britain's X-files* by Dr David Clarke [**FT304:28–29**]. However, those of us who suspect that some files may have been held back were inevitably dismissed as conspiracy theorists in the article. Having been a middle-ranking civil servant (although not with the MOD), I am all too aware just how secretive our government organisations can be, even when it comes to quite trivial matters. I am also reluctant to accept that files, particularly significant ones, can just go missing or be inadvertently destroyed. In my experience, such files may end up in unlikely places, but they rarely disappear irretrievably. In fact, in Dr Clarke's book *Out of the Shadows* (co-authored with Andy Roberts), this very question is addressed (in Chapter 8). He mentions the late Ralph Noyes [obit **FT120:45**], a very senior civil servant with the MOD, who reports having seen the infamous gun camera footage (which Dr Clarke did refer to in a recent radio interview). In fact, it would be interesting to hear Dr Clarke's latest thoughts on Mr Noyes's contribution to the UFO debate. My view is that, although we have no option other than to accept the MOD's word that the files that have been released are all that there are, I have no doubt that if significant or even disturbing evidence on UFOs (in the sense that they are intelligently controlled extraterrestrial vehicles) is held by the MOD, they will keep it secret for as long as possible. This doesn't undermine the perfectly reasonable assertion that the Files' release programme was, in effect, a cost-cutting exercise.

Geoff Clifton
Solihull, West Midlands

South Shields Polt

Like many others, I was fascinated by *The South Shields Poltergeist: One Family's Fight Against An Invisible Intruder* by Mike Hallowell and Darren Ritson, published in 2008 amid a blaze of publicity and promises of compelling video footage. However, virtually nothing further has been heard and a quick search of online forums reveals the growing scepticism that this lack of additional evidence or information has created. Mike Hallowell seems to get very defensive and evasive when questioned about this and continually cites Alan Murdie's endorsement of the case as one of the most compelling that he has seen. I wonder therefore if Alan still stands by his original views on the case and whether he can provide any update or explanation for the silence in the intervening years?

Mark Graham
By email

Alan Murdie responds: Since the publication of their book, Darren Ritson and Mike Hallowell have made the data on the case available to members of the Society for Psychical Research, including myself. Both authors have spoken at public events on their findings, and it may be recalled that Mike Hallowell spoke at the Fortean Times Unconvention in London in October 2010.

I maintain my position on the bona fides of the two authors and their research. Having interviewed both of them at length and also examined and copied much of their original data, I am satisfied that they were involved with a genuine case of poltergeist activity for which no normal explanation has yet been found. I shared my assessment of their South Shields data with a study day held by the SPR in London in October 2009, and stated my views on their book in a review published in the SPR Journal in April 2010.

Consequently, my focus has shifted away from the question of "Did these events happen?" to "Given that apparently anomalous events occurred, what was the nature of the forces at work, and how do they relate to data from other reported cases?" Unfortunately, these are much harder questions to address, given the lack of any established paradigm or framework for assessing poltergeist activity.

The decision of the authors to limit the release of their data has been made against the background of many uninformed, personally defamatory and hostile reactions expressed by various console-based critics operating solely from cyberspace. When it became apparent that many of these so-called sceptics and critics were not actually interested or capable of examining the South Shields case according to the rules of evidence or from any scientific perspective, but only interested in ventilating their own feelings, problems and issues, the authors decided to limit the release of their data. Consequently, they have elected to publish further details through peer-reviewed journals, a process that takes time, owing to the amount of material and the demands of the review process itself.

Since 2008, both authors have been actively engaged in investigating other cases, as well as undertaking and publishing a re-examination of the historic Willington Mill case. Both authors have also been engaged in a study of specific phenomena experienced at South Shields, with reference to parallel examples reported in the literature of poltergeist cases. When this study is published, it will hopefully cast further light on particular aspects of this very interesting case.

Tiny doors

Paul Dutton asks if there are any other trees with little doors, like the one he photographed near Birmingham [**FT302:70**]. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, there is a tiny door in the base of a tree in Lake Harriet Park. It's been there since at least the 1990s and is usually referred to locally as the elf door. Children often leave notes there that are mysteriously answered. Here's an article from 2003 about it: http://onlineathens.com/stories/082403/fea_20030824031.shtml

If you do a web search for fairy doors there are all sorts of links to sites selling readymade tiny doors that can be installed anywhere. There was also a spate of public fairy doors installed in Ann Arbor, Michigan, explained at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairy_Doors_of_Ann_Arbor,_MI

Paul Prescott
Novelty, Ohio

Imaginary ghosts

To answer David Newell's question [**FT302:69**] about whether or not any other experiments were attempted to replicate the success that the ARG Owen group had in creating Philip the Imaginary Ghost, there have been a few. Dr Owen himself was able to repeat his own experiment several times (with differing groups of people) and actualised a few different entities, including Lilith (a French Canadian spy), Sebastian (a mediæval alchemist) and Axel (a man from the future). Prior to this, a group working out of the Russian city of St Petersburg in 1913 claimed to have physically manifested the spirit of Puss-in-Boots (something that the Owens-led groups strove for in their experiments but failed to duplicate). Then, of course, there is the story that Alexandra David-Neel tells of being able to create a tulpa in her book, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*. According to her, her thoughtform assumed a life of its own but had to be dissipated when it became belligerent and sinister.

More recently, there is an Australian group that created 'Skippy' (a 14-year-old girl) who, just like the Owen conjurations, was said to be able to communicate via a series of knocks and raps.

◆ I think Greg May made an error when discussing his "Kentucky Critter" story [**FT301:70-1**]. While John Keel did discuss a "goblin universe" (in his book *The Eighth Tower*, I believe) it was actually FW (Ted) Holiday who wrote *The Goblin Universe*, published posthumously in 1986 with an introduction by Colin Wilson.

Trevor Ouellette
North Bay, Ontario

Identifying Eugene

Back in the Sixties, I had an aunt and uncle who lived near Cincinnati, Ohio, who delighted in taking friends and family to see 'Eugene', a deceased black gentleman who remained unidentified for many years. So the coroner laid him out in a coffin in a shed for public viewing in the hope that someone might identify him. No visit to Aunt Kaki and Uncle Omar's house was complete without driving out to see 'Eugene'.

Here was a real urban legend that had become a sort of local tourist attraction (see http://www.roadsideamerica.com/tip/15730)

During one visit, my uncle turned off the light and moaned like a ghost. My cousin knocked my grandmother to the ground as he fled the shed.

I am curious to know if the practice of trying to identify a dead person has been replicated elsewhere.

Greg May
Orlando, Florida

John Michell

Phil Baker has pointed out that John Michell never wrote a column for the *Daily Mail*, as stated in your editorial on John's continuing influence [**FT303:2, 304:2**]. It was astrologer Jonathan Cainer who formed a posse of New Agers to accompany his horoscopes in the *Daily Mirror*. The accompanying Thursday offerings by John often bewildered the tabloid's readership with its arcane philosophy and baffling geometries. The dogs barked but the caravan of forteana travelled on from Atlantis to Avalon, taking in the Earth Spirit, crop circles, UFOs, Druids, Stonehenge, traditional numbers and creation myths. John provided an oasis of wisdom in a desert of leftist ideological puerility. A solo Cainer was lured back to his spiritual home at the *Daily Mail*. John went on to pen (or rather type with two fingers) another more personal column for the *Oldie*.

Paul Screeton
Seaton Carew, Cleveland

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PAUL TAYLOR

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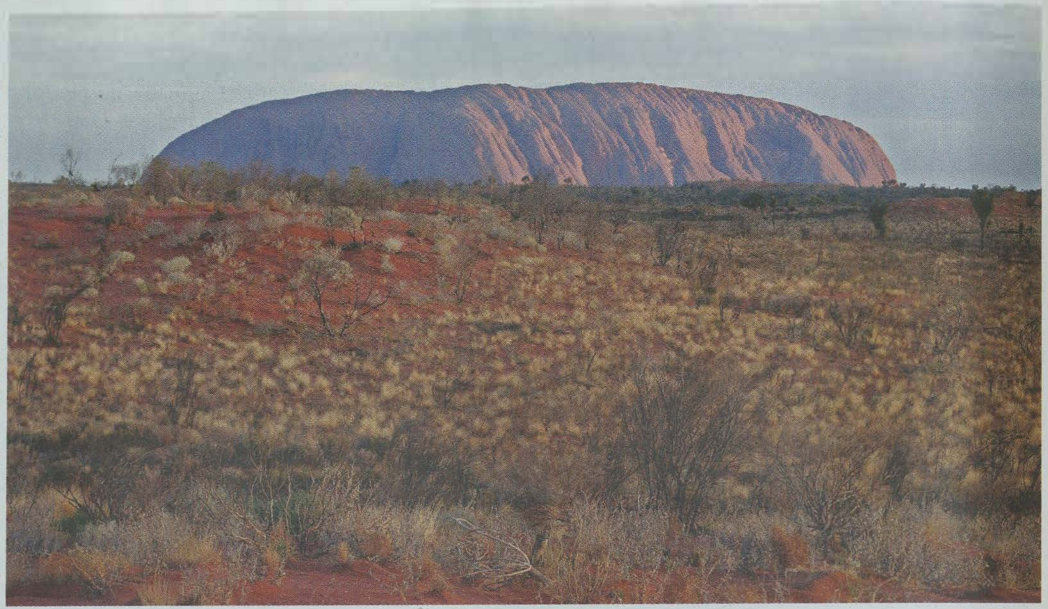

Uluru rendezvous

In 2007 my wife and I went on a five-month round-the-world trip. About half way through we were at Uluru (Ayers Rock), in the centre of Australia, for a three-day stay. Part of the experience was the "Sounds of Silence" dinner when we were bussed with perhaps 200 others into the desert at night to enjoy a meal under the stars and a presentation showing us the major star formations. We were free to choose which table to sit at and each had around 12 guests, usually in couples. We sat and did the usual introductions around the table. There were a Swedish couple, some Americans, an Israeli couple and two other English couples.

One of the Englishmen across from me said: "That accent sounds familiar, where are you from?"

"Halifax in Yorkshire," I replied.

"I used to go there regularly, to a carpet manufacturers called Crossleys."

"My brother used to be Assistant Buyer there."

"What was his name?"

"Terry White."

"Terry White! Terry White!" he repeated incredulously. "That's who I used to go and see."

What are the chances, in the middle of Australia, that in 30 seconds I'd meet someone who knew my brother? When I related the story to Terry he knew the man immediately.

Graham White
Foston on the Wolds, Humberside

"What are the chances, in the middle of Australia, that I'd meet someone who knew my brother?"

Column of sparks

In 1979, I was 13 and living with my parents and two sisters in a mobile home sited in Kilmore – my father's birthplace, a little village in county Wexford, Ireland. My family had moved there a year earlier, having emigrated from England in the spring of 1977. My father was interested in setting up a local business and had invited family and friends around one evening to discuss his ideas over a few drinks. I believe it was around midnight, my sisters and I were in bed, when my grandfather hushed everyone assembled and pointed to the ceiling. Later, in recounting the incident, my mother described seeing a shimmering column of 'sparks', the top of which touched the ceiling of the mobile home. According to her, this had suddenly appeared by the fireplace and persisted for several seconds before disappearing as quickly as it had arrived. As there was a fire in the room, one would be forgiven for explaining it away as "an exploding ember". However, this was an anthracite fuel fire, isolated from the room by way of a mica (transparent silicate) front designed to contain sparks and explosive embers. Therefore the fire, though in use, was sealed from the room, effectively ruling it out as the source. My father, grandfather and others searched the room in the hope of finding a possible cause, but drew a blank.

Some weeks later, the column of sparks reappeared, this time witnessed by my mother and me. I recall her being startled, referring to it as the "same thing" she had seen previously. Once again, it appeared by the anthracite fire and lasted five to six seconds. I can best describe it as a column of glitter, the 'particles' brightening and dimming as they appeared to reflect an invisible light source – think of the 'energiser' employed by the *USS Enterprise* for teleporting crew in the early *Star Trek* episodes.

We moved to a council house and then later into a house my father and I built approximately five miles from the village in a place called Kilmore Quay. The same phenomenon occurred several times in each house and always by the fire. I was present on each occasion. Once, when I was the only person present, I placed my hand in the column. I felt nothing – not the slightest tingle.

One obvious explanation is that (notwithstanding the earlier manifestations in the mobile home) it could have been an exploding ember, given there was always a fire nearby. However, the fire wasn't always lit, and I have seen embers burst from a fire and explode in a shower of sparks many times, which always results in a distinctive pattern: the sparks always descend and the event is very short-lived. Although the "column of sparks" made only a brief appearance, it wasn't as transient as an exploding ember. The sparks floated up and down and winked in and out, as if reflecting a light source – nothing like a spark from a fire.

To this day I remain mystified. I have often wondered if this phenomenon was a product of static electricity, but my science education cannot reconcile the "static hypothesis" with what I saw. I have searched tirelessly on the Internet without success. I would welcome any light you can throw on the subject. This story is absolutely true and furthermore, I am sane (at least I think I am) and was not under the influence of any psychotropic drugs at the time.

Mr ST Flynn
By email

Editor's note: This phenomenon calls to mind the strange experience of Edmund Swifte, the Keeper of the Crown Jewels, in October 1817. Swifte and his family lived in the Jewel House at the Tower of London. One evening at dinner, his wife cried out. A cylindrical object, about the thickness of an arm, was hovering between the table and the ceiling. This 'glass tube' seemed to contain a dense swirling fluid, white and pale azure, which Swifte compared to "the gathering of a summer cloud". They watched it move towards Swifte's sister-in-law, then pass around the table and pause over Mrs Swifte's right shoulder. She crouched down, clutched at her shoulder with both hands, and shrieked, "It has seized me!" Swifte grabbed his chair and struck at the panelled wall behind her. The object vanished. Curiously, neither the Swiftes' seven-year-old son nor the sister-in-law saw anything, leading Swifte to suppose it was something supernatural.

Miracle brolly

Around 10 years ago I bought my daughter a white lace umbrella and a plastic dagger with fake blood for a fancy dress gig she was going to as a Goth bride. The morning after the gig, I gathered up discarded clothes, umbrella and dagger and put them in a bin bag in our walk-in attic. Fast-forward a few years, another fancy dress do, and we were in the attic looking for something suitable for her to wear. I picked up the umbrella and opened it to find that several spokes were bent and a good part of the lace had ripped. She told me that it had been dropped and several people had trodden on it, but asked me not to throw it away in case it came in useful again as a fancy dress prop. When we'd finished in the attic everything went back into the bin bag and lay untouched for several more years.

The third fancy dress party saw her dress as Lara Croft and once again we went scrummaging around the attic, this time looking for the plastic dagger. I found the bag with the umbrella and the dagger and once again opened the umbrella out. I was shocked to see that it was as new, no broken spokes, no ripped lace. It was perfect. I turned to my daughter and said I thought this umbrella was bent and broken, and she confirmed that it had been. When I showed it to her, she was as baffled as I was. Has anyone experienced anything similar?

Marian Davies
By email

Singing ghost

Back in 1986, when I was 11, I used to tape the Top 40 charts on a Sunday afternoon at my grandmother's house. We visited her every week for tea. I would record the chart countdown in her bedroom, using a cassette recorder that belonged to my grandfather. The set-up was quite primitive: I would place the microphone next to the radio on her bedside table and let it record.

I shared my bedroom at the time with my older brother. We would often listen to the chart in bed before falling asleep. One particular cassette had the top 10 on it; I remember Madonna was Number One, so it must have been July. We had listened to it a couple of times. After the chart had finished, the tape had about five minutes of silence and would stop at the end. One night during this silence at the end of the tape our grandfather's voice appeared, singing. We both jumped out of bed and replayed the tape. It was definitely our grandfather, singing in a creepy lullaby style, 'la la la la'. It only lasted maybe 15 to 10 seconds, but I remember it vividly. The oddest thing was his voice was surrounded by what we could only describe as hundreds of pieces of paper, constantly flying around him. He had died the year before and we decided not to mention it to our mum, who had taken his death very badly. I eventually threw the cassette away, being spooked a little too much by it. It was definitely not on the tape before that night.

My strangest experience, however, happened in 2004. I put my one-year-old daughter to bed in her cot and went downstairs once she was asleep. My wife was at work and there was no one else in the house. We had baby monitors set up, one in the living room, the other in my daughter's room. I was watching TV when I heard rattling on the monitor and knew instantly that it was the baby activity centre. I can remember getting up and cursing the dog that I assumed had gone upstairs and knocked it. However, the dog was in the passage and the baby gates closed at the bottom and top of the stairs. The activity centre was in the doorway of my daughter's room and I had to move it to get in the room. My daughter was still fast asleep. As you can imagine I was freaked out by it; there was no rational explanation.

John Cochrane
Hartlepool, Cleveland

Earworms

I was interested to read about the case of Susan Root, who suffers from a rare form of tinnitus where loud music plays in her head day and night [**FT300:24**]. I also nearly always have a tune in my head, but I don't suffer like Ms Root with sleepless nights, nor is my music overwhelmingly loud. Sometimes it's music I like, but at other times it's music that I detest and find very annoying. In the latter case I find it extremely difficult to dispel the tune, even by trying to "overwrite" it with one I like. However, the music I hear doesn't bother me for much of the time. Incidentally, my wife rarely has a tune in her head, which I found surprising, as I thought everyone did.

Recently, however, my admittedly minor condition has been exacerbated by the tune used by the local ice cream van. This year the van is pumping out 'The Yellow Rose of Texas' and after it has gone the dratted tune stays in my head for the rest of the day. Last year it was 'The Teddy Bears' Picnic', which was even worse. I have even complained to the local environmental health department, but they say they have no authority over which tunes ice cream vans choose to use. C'est la vie!

Eric Fitch
Hereford

Bathroom Soldier

My friend has lived in a flat in a converted barracks in central Winchester for a number of years. Since moving in, she has been aware of the odd shadow, the classic glimpse of movement out of the corner of her eye, but nothing more significant than that. She is a pragmatic east Londoner by birth and has lived happily with this insubstantial presence until January 2013 when it decided to make itself much more visible. One weekday she was following her normal morning routine, washing her face in the bathroom basin. Her bathroom is small and windowless and she prefers the softer light of her hallway first thing in the morning to the harsh, direct lighting in her bathroom; therefore the lighting was low but good enough to see by. She says she felt compelled to stop washing her face and look into the mirror over the basin. To her horror she saw the torso of a man in army uniform. She clearly recalls that the material was coarse and green with gold-coloured buttons and that there was no head, just a body.

In classic ghostly fashion, one minute it was there and then it was gone. While recounting this experience to me, she was clear that from the angle of the view in the mirror, the ghost must have been standing in her bath. The building has been a military site since the 18th century, providing accommodation for the Rifle Brigade, and later the ill-fated Light Brigade. The ground floor has also been a morgue and the upper floors were used to treat sick soldiers; however, it is the more recent use as a barracks for privates that she feels may be the origin of the apparition. She senses he is harmless but would prefer it if he appeared at a more civilised time of day!

I did some research on the building and via the British Newspaper Archive came upon a report entitled "Barracks Death Mystery" (31 Aug 1929): a Corporal William Lewis West, 24, had been found in the barrack-room the previous day "with a bullet wound in the head and his service rifle resting on his chest". My friend suggests that this may be our ghostly soldier for two reasons. One: there appears to be something odd and sinister about his death. Why was his rifle "resting" on his chest – surely it would have been dropped if the bullet was self-administered; or if it was murder the placing of the weapon on the chest sounds a bit ritualistic... Two: she saw no head, only a torso, with an obvious reference to the fact that he had been shot in the head. I'm not so convinced, but I have suggested that she uses the name next time any phenomena occur. I await further incidents with interest.

Vicky Holt
Whitefield, Manchester

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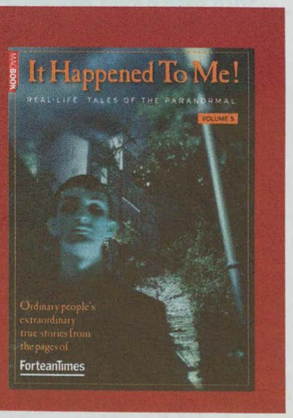
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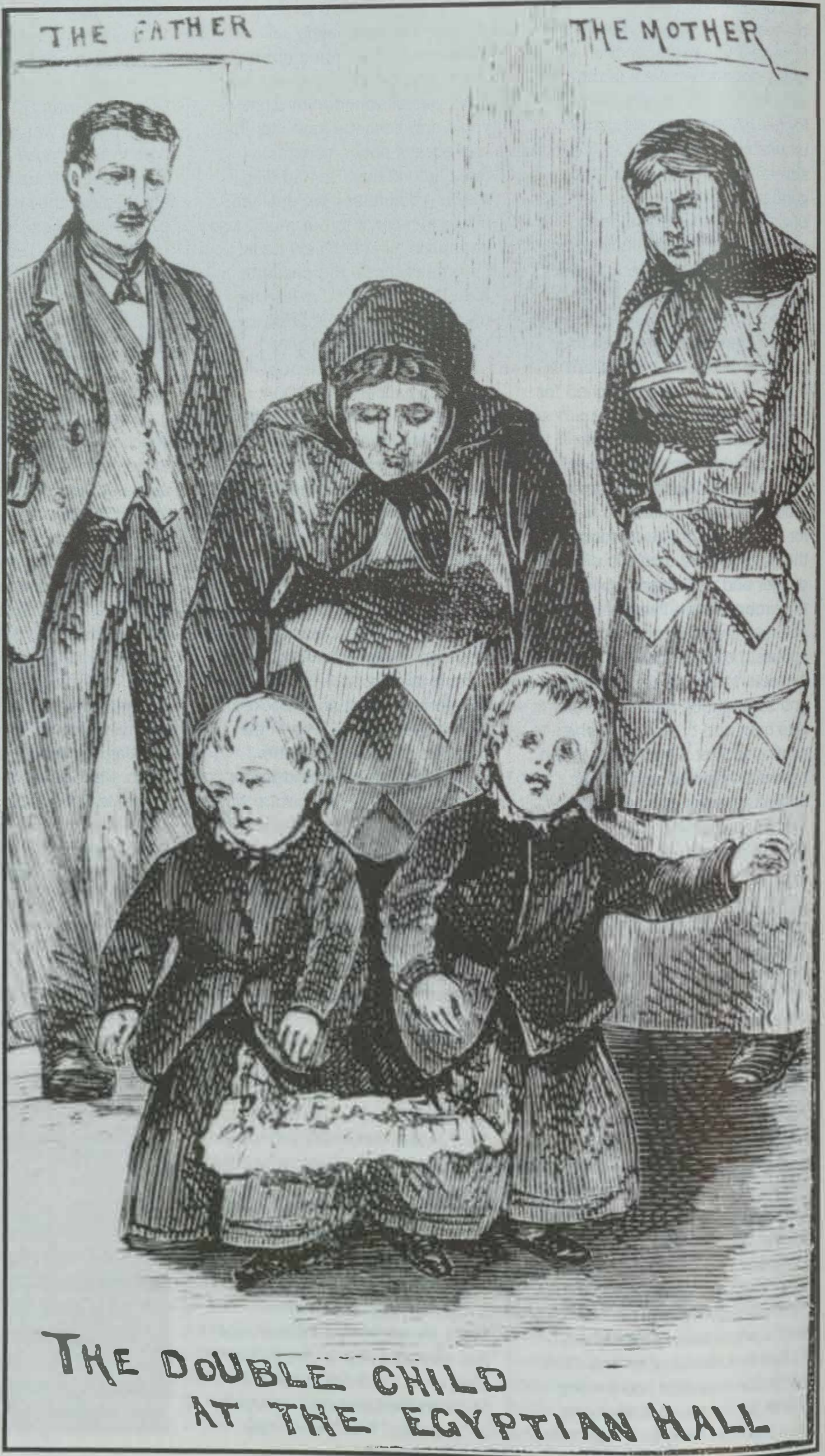
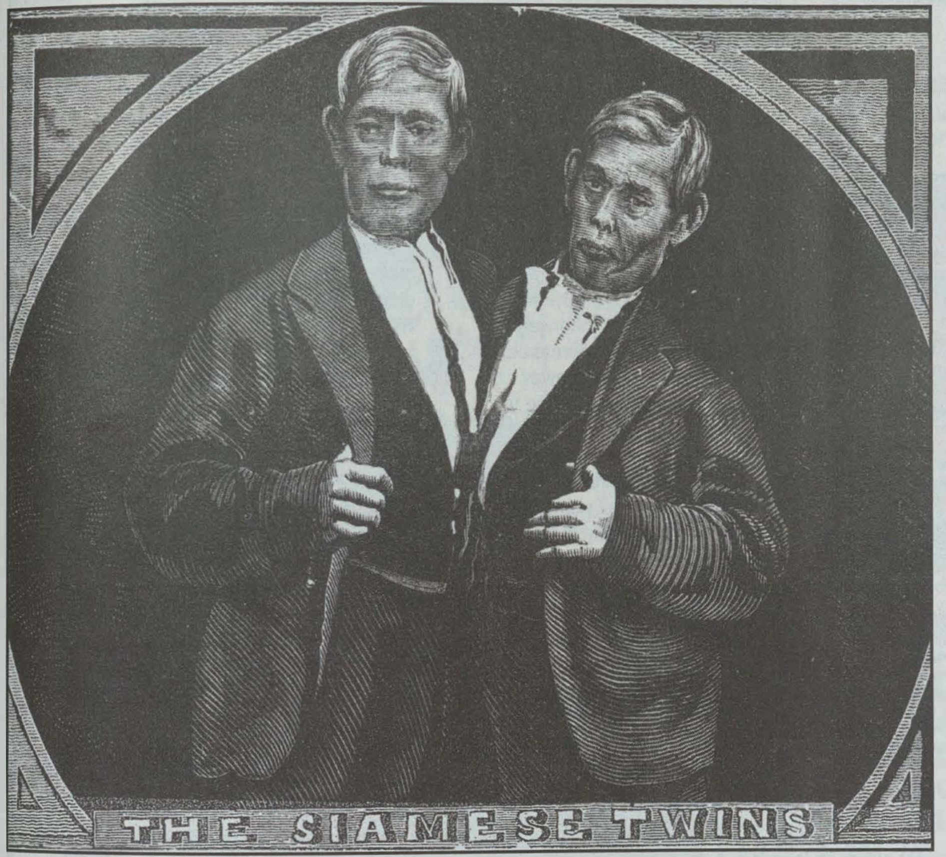
24. CONJOINED TWINS

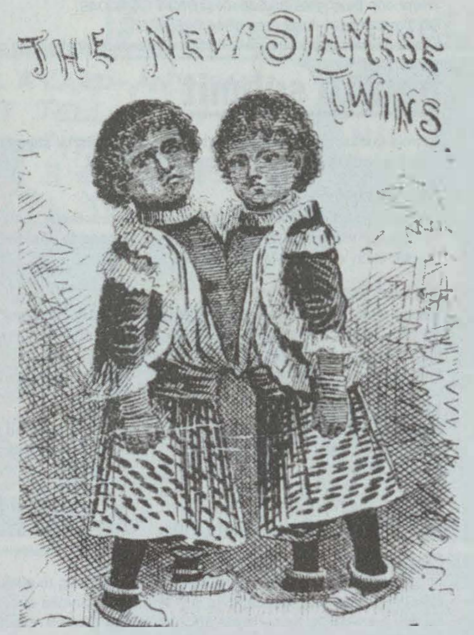
The iconography of conjoined twins owes much to the popular press: whereas most articles about them in medical journals were without images, those in popular magazines were often well illustrated. When there was a scarcity of criminal news, the *Illustrated Police News* took an interest in popular amusements, and occasionally featured conjoined twins exhibited in the London sideshows.

The original Siamese twins, Chang and Eng, were born in 1811 and lived united for 63 years. They were omphalopagus twins, joined at the abdomen. It was more than once debated whether they could be separated, but when they were younger, the twins themselves were unwilling to submit to such an operation. When the Siamese twins grew older, they became afraid that after the death of one of them, the other would be tied to a corpse. During a journey to London and Edinburgh they consulted several eminent surgeons; the verdict of Sir William Ferguson, among others, was that it was inadvisable to attempt a surgical separation. At autopsy, it was seen that the Siamese twins' liver and several major vessels were shared, and although they could have been separated with ease if they had lived today, an attempt at operation with 19th century techniques would probably have been fatal. The Siamese twins do not appear to have made it into the *IPN* while alive, but after their death, a standard drawing of them in old age was published with their obituary.

The conjoined twins Rosa and Josepha Blazek were born in rural Bohemia in 1878. Much astonished by this monstrous birth, their parents consulted the local witch, who recommended that the children be kept without food for eight days. The twins survived this cruel treatment, however, and after this impressive demonstration of resilience, even the witch agreed that they should be kept alive.


THE FATHER
THE MOTHER
THE DOUBLE CHILD AT THE EGYPTIAN HALL





OPPOSITE PAGE: The Blazek twins, from the *Illustrated Police News of* 27 Nov 1880. **LEFT:** The original Siamese Twins, Chang and Eng, from *IPN,* 31 Jan 1874. **ABOVE:** The Orissa twins, from *IPN,* 17 September 1892. **BELOW:** *La Séparation de Doodica–Radica*.

Several showmen applied to Rosa and Josepha's parents to get permission to exhibit them for money. In November 1880, the two little girls were on show at the Egyptian Hall in London. The *IPN* journalist thought them bright, intelligent children, and reproduced a good drawing of them and their parents. Rosa and Josepha were pygopagus twins, joined at the hips. They later went on to make a career for themselves, of course preferring life in gay Paris to the drab existence in the Bohemian backwoods in the cabin of their rustic parents. They were called 'Le pygopage du Théatre de l'age Gaité' and were a well-known attraction on the Paris stage, amusing the audience by singing and playing violin duets. Later, they passed out of public notice until they consulted the surgical clinic at the Prague General Hospital in 1910, after Rosa had noticed a large and rapidly growing abdominal swelling. She was asked whether she might be pregnant, but denied it vehemently; her sister, who certainly was in a position to know, supported her denial. But before the investigation was brought any further, Rosa was delivered of a healthy son. Later, the two inseparable sisters married the same man and moved to the United States; they died there in 1922 at the age of 43.

The *IPN* also featured another, more obscure pair of conjoined twins. The two little girls Radica and Doodica were born in Orissa, India. Just like the original Siamese twins, they were omphalopagus conjoined twins, joined at the abdomen. The superstitious residents of their village saw the girls as symbols of divine wrath and demanded their immediate expulsion. Distraught by the appearance of his daughters, their father wanted to physically separate the girls with his own hands, but local officials restrained him and rescued the infants. Later, the monks of a local temple took over their care.

In 1892, Radica and Doodica began their exhibition career at the Royal Aquarium, under the London showman Captain Colman. The *IPN* journalist thought them intelligent and bright; although they had only been taught English for a few months, they understood what he said. According to their impresario, they were on the way to the World's Fair in Chicago. Their career as travelling exhibition objects continued until 1902, when Doodica developed tuberculosis.

In Paris, Dr Eugène-Louis Doyen surgically separated the sisters in an effort to save Radica. Doyen was a pioneering medical filmmaker and filmed the twins' surgery as *La Séparation de Doodica–Radica*. The operation was initially considered a success; although Doodica soon expired from tuberculosis, Radica seemed to thrive. However, she had already contracted tuberculosis and died from it a year later; the final months of her life were spent in a Paris sanatorium, alone.

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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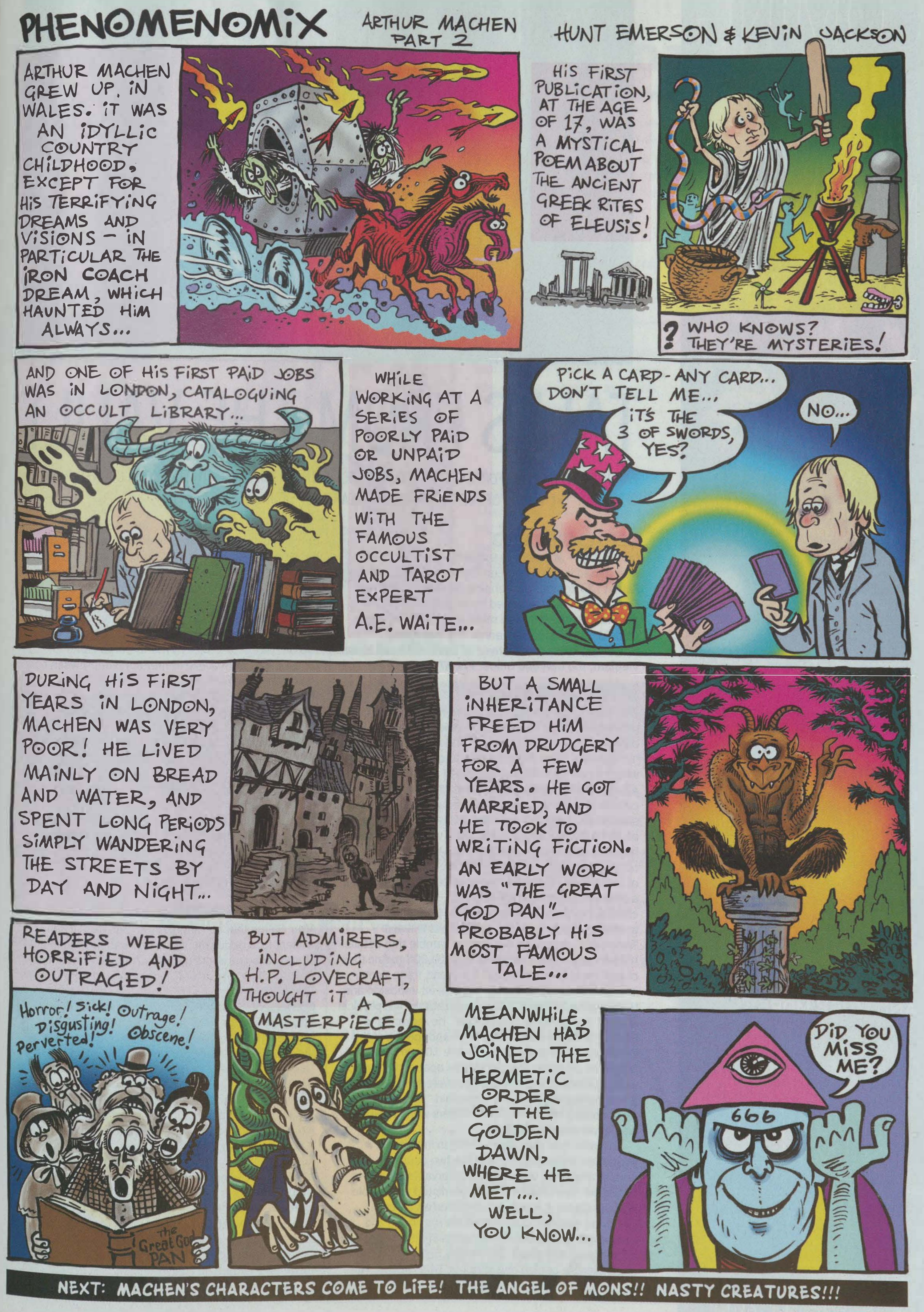
PHENOMENOMIX
ARTHUR MACHEN PART 2
HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON
ARTHUR MACHEN GREW UP IN WALES. IT WAS AN IDYLLIC COUNTRY CHILDHOOD, EXCEPT FOR HIS TERRIFYING DREAMS AND VISIONS – IN PARTICULAR THE IRON COACH DREAM, WHICH HAUNTED HIM ALWAYS...
HIS FIRST PUBLICATION, AT THE AGE OF 17, WAS A MYSTICAL POEM ABOUT THE ANCIENT GREEK RITES OF ELEUSIS!
? WHO KNOWS? THEY'RE MYSTERIES!
AND ONE OF HIS FIRST PAID JOBS WAS IN LONDON, CATALOGUING AN OCCULT LIBRARY...
WHILE WORKING AT A SERIES OF POORLY PAID OR UNPAID JOBS, MACHEN MADE FRIENDS WITH THE FAMOUS OCCULTIST AND TAROT EXPERT A.E. WAITE...
PICK A CARD - ANY CARD... DON'T TELL ME..., IT'S THE 3 OF SWORDS, YES?
NO...
DURING HIS FIRST YEARS IN LONDON, MACHEN WAS VERY POOR! HE LIVED MAINLY ON BREAD AND WATER, AND SPENT LONG PERIODS SIMPLY WANDERING THE STREETS BY DAY AND NIGHT...
BUT A SMALL INHERITANCE FREED HIM FROM DRUDGERY FOR A FEW YEARS. HE GOT MARRIED, AND HE TOOK TO WRITING FICTION. AN EARLY WORK WAS "THE GREAT GOD PAN" – PROBABLY HIS MOST FAMOUS TALE...
READERS WERE HORRIFIED AND OUTRAGED!
Horror! Sick! Outrage! Disgusting! Obscene! Perverted!
The Great God PAN
BUT ADMIRERS, INCLUDING H.P. LOVECRAFT, THOUGHT IT
A MASTERPIECE!
MEANWHILE, MACHEN HAD JOINED THE HERMETIC ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN, WHERE HE MET.... WELL, YOU KNOW...
DID YOU MISS ME?
666
NEXT: MACHEN'S CHARACTERS COME TO LIFE! THE ANGEL OF MONS!! NASTY CREATURES!!!

COMING NEXT MONTH

STUFF AND NONSENSE

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INTO THIN AIR...

THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF OWEN PARFITT

+

THE CANNOCK PIGMAN, CROPPIE CHALLENGE, STIGMATIC SIGNS AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 306

ON SALE 12 SEP 2013

HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

SEPTEMBER 1973

On the 14th – at precisely 9:40am – a peace treaty was signed in Laos between the government and the Pathet Lao communists ending 10 years of civil war. The timing was determined by an astrologer as the optimum moment for the most successful outcome, said Prime Minister Souvanna. The event was witnessed by representatives of both North and South Vietnam, the USA and China. **FT2:17**

SEPTEMBER 1993

This month, the body of Ferdinand Marcos was repatriated to the Philippines in an extravaganza organised by his wife Imelda and only son Ferdinand 'Bongbong'. It was flown by chartered jet from Hawaii where it had been kept refrigerated since 1988. A horse-drawn hearse trundled it 10 miles to the cathedral in Manila, past many thousands of fervent supporters; among them several cultish groups – such as Alpha Omega Sagrada Familia – who worshipped him as a god, in denial of the facts that the dictator's oppressive regime emptied the treasury, leaving debts of £24 billion. (Curiously, in researching this, I found a page on a conspiracy theory site – rumormillnews.com/cgi-bin/archive.cgi?read=209750 – that links to what purports to be 'Marcos's Last Will and Testament', an extraordinary mad ramble that details his bank accounts, mentions that 10,000 metric tons of gold were buried beneath the World Trade Center in New York City, that Bongbong was an impostor, and that he gave to the UK's Queen Elizabeth "the physical ancient ring of Alpha-Omega Ring" he reckoned to be as significant as the Holy Grail and the Ark of the Covenant.) During the burial on the 10th, in Marcos's hometown of Batac, his coffin was opened for public viewing. Mourners and intimates were stunned by his grotesquely puffy features. One said "He looked like an uncooked cinnamon bun". Others were convinced it was a wax dummy. **FT73:21**

In March this year, three children in Western Australia – Jamie Andrich and his two cousins – dug up a strange rock on a beach at Cervantes, north of Perth; but they could not have predicted the trouble it would cause. It was later identified as an egg laid by an elephant bird (*Aepyornis maximus*) and carbon-dated to about 2,000 years BP. It is huge: its circumference is about 31.7in (80.5cm), while that of an average ostrich egg is about 14in (35cm). The problem is that *A. maximus* lived on Madagascar and became extinct more than 200 years ago – so the mystery is how Jamie's egg came to be on a beach around 4,500 miles (7,240km) away across an ocean.

Dr Patricia Rich of Monash University, Melbourne, scotched the 'floating to Australia' theory because the damage to the shell by marine organisms to be expected from a long immersion simply wasn't in evidence. Instead, she suggests that, as such eggs were traded in the 19th century, it might have survived a shipwreck. When the Andrich family dutifully informed the WA government that a collector had offered them £70,000 for it, the Arts Minister, Peter Foss, accused them of breaching the Land Act by digging on a state-owned beach and of trying to poach the egg. On the 28th August, Foss offered them a "paltry" finder's fee of £11,000, but the boys, understandably peeved, sneaked out with the egg and buried it at a secret location. As this month began, Foss was forced to match the collector's offer if the Andriches agreed to put the egg on exhibition in a Perth museum. **FT70:44; 72:14**

SEPTEMBER 2003

After claims that an "energy field", emitted by an ancient icon depicting Christ, had caused the deaths of several supervisors at the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, the artwork was removed from display. The rumours themselves, about "an inexplicable phenomenon", seemed to emanate from one Boris Sapunov, said to be of the museum's Russian section. "Three or four people died of diseases and the coincidence made me wonder," he said. He thinks "a negative bio-field" comes from the middle part of the icon, causing "high blood pressure, headaches and malaise". Vyacheslav Gubanov, a "local doctor", is said to have carried out an "expert analysis" of the icon. "It is very powerful," he explained, adding that it is not causing the deaths directly. "It produces a lot of power which makes the human brain vibrate at a high frequency. Not every person can stand that." Sapunov's colleagues at the Hermitage were sceptical: "He's just a nutty professor," said one, an icon specialist. "Only one of the workers in contact with the icon died and she had cancer." I'm puzzled; since when were local doctors on a par with Hermitage experts in analysing icons? **FT178:22**

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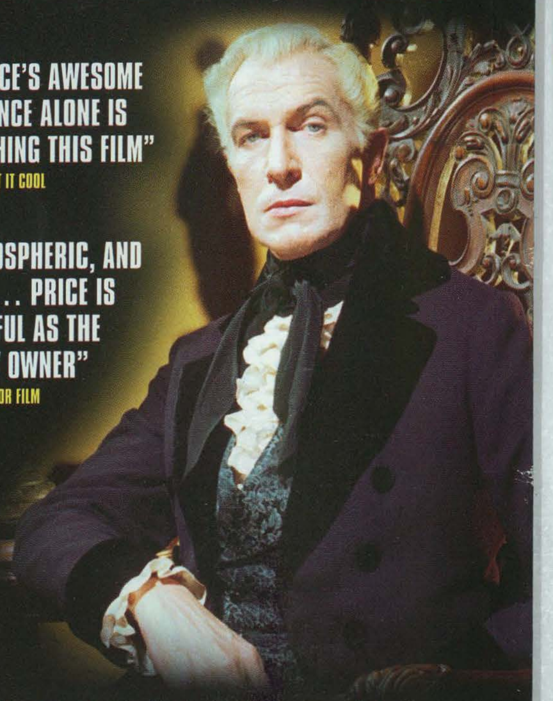

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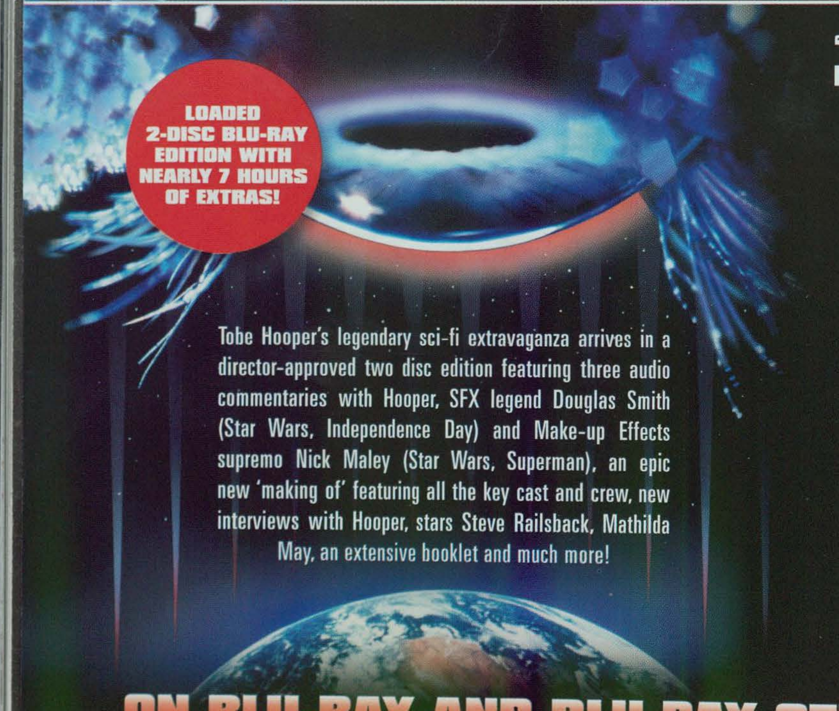
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